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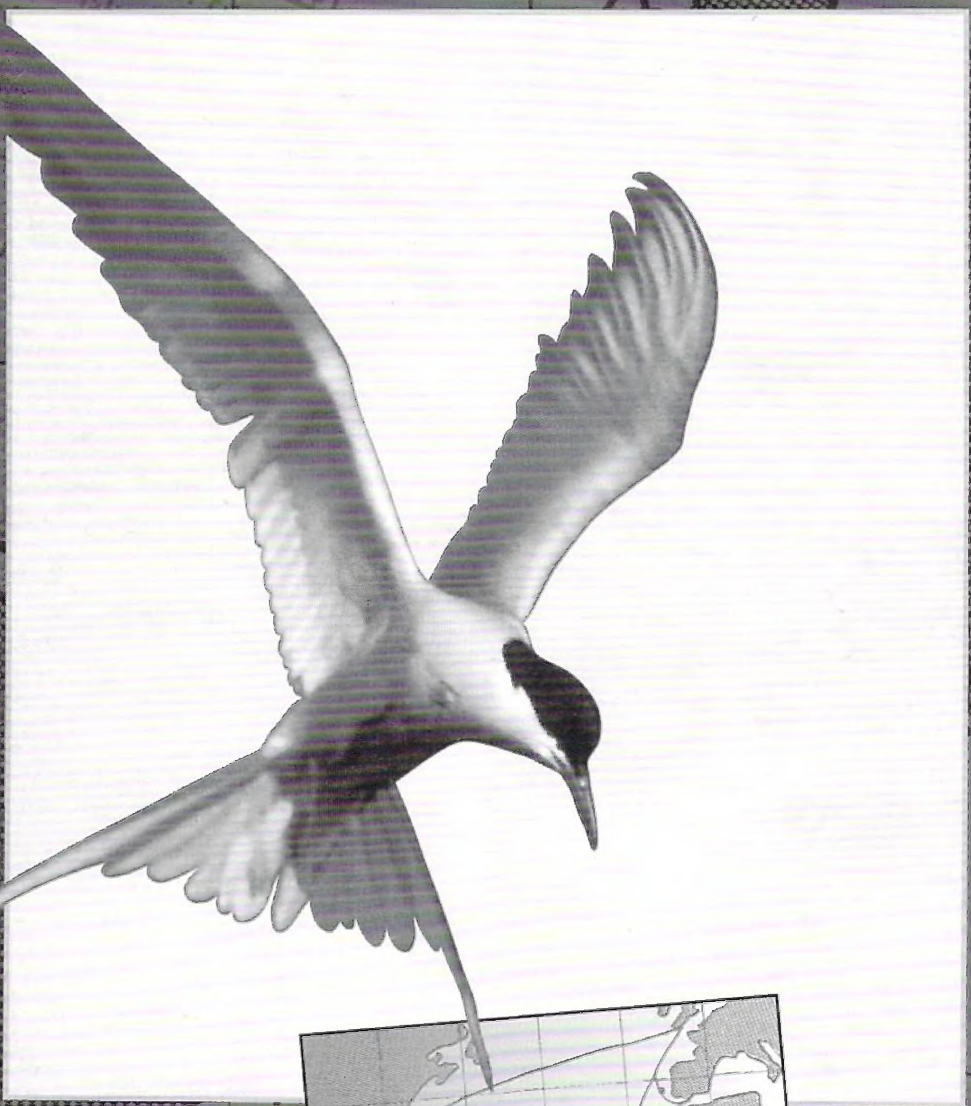
Sea Swallow

Annual Report of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



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OFFICERS OF THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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For details of local representatives and other useful addresses see page 89

Subcription rates. Full and Associate Members £8 (£7 if covenanted) annually.
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Membership has been widened from the R. N. to include all those who share a common background - the sea itself - regardless of nationality *

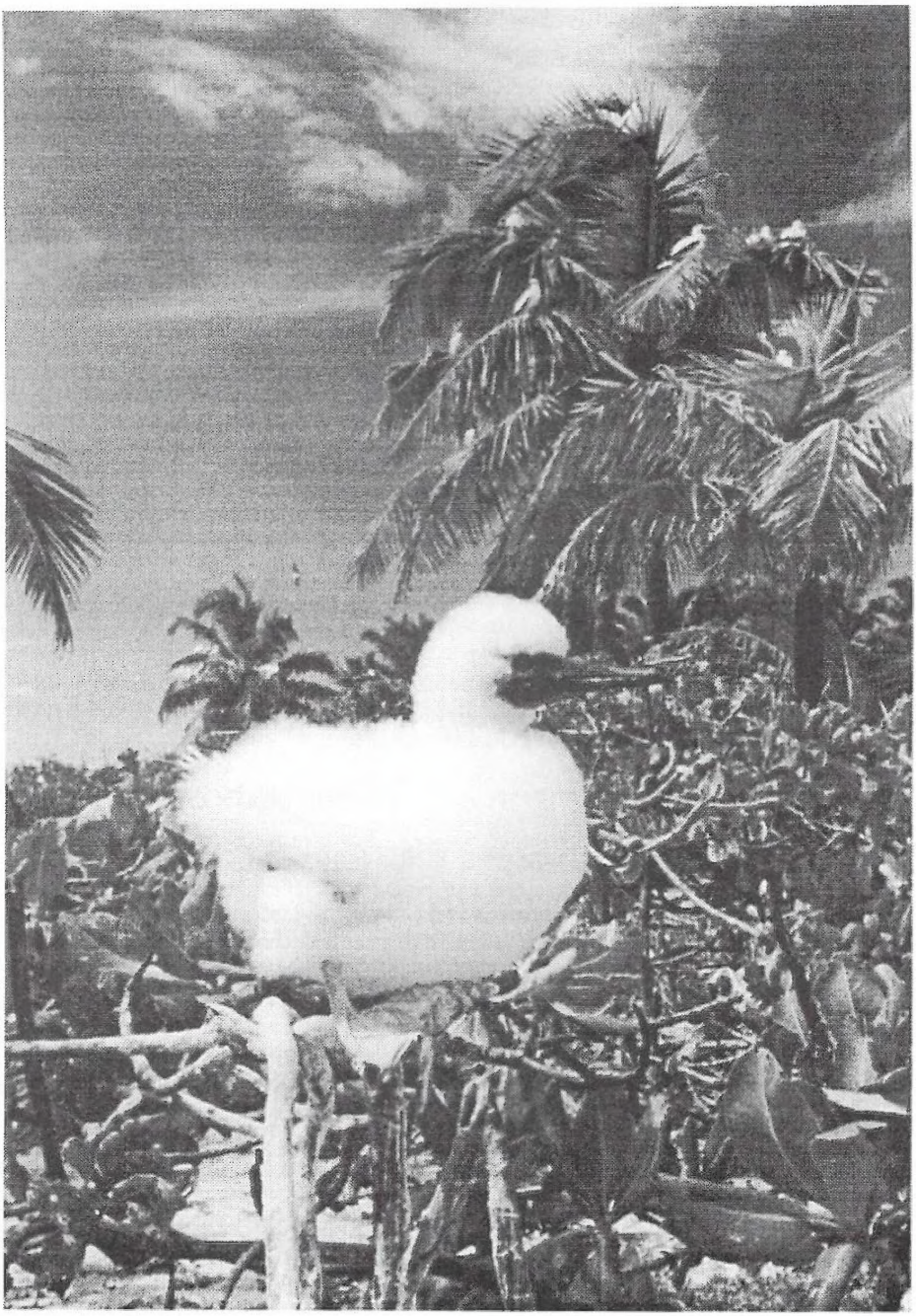
Aims and activines. The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seablrds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

RNBWS Record Forms. Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea. Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Warrant Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport Hants. PO12 3DX. (Tel. 01705-526264).
Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.

Completed record forms (both seabirds and landbirds) should be sent to Michael Casement.

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor
(see instructions to authors page 89).

*An application form for membership is at page 88



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. Juvenile, Diego Garcia, March 1997.
One of many illustrations of the *"Wildlife Report of Diego Garcia"*, compiled by
Able Seaman (SR) Andrew Richardson, HMS *Herald*
- see President's Foreword (over).

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be able to attend the Golden Jubilee AGM last December were treated to a most inspiring review of past RNBWS work and future plans. A series of excellent presentations by members gave a comprehensive picture of the quality of observations afloat and ashore, and underlined the unrivalled potential of seafarers as monitors of environmental parameters. Our keynote speaker, Dr Robin Pellew, Director of WWF/WWFN, was inspired to endorse the challenges which RNBWS had set itself at the start of its second half-century. He applauded the desire to computerise RNBWS records and to improve their accessibility for wider study. He subsequently gained WWF financial support for RNBWS's first expedition, noting that Service teams represented talent and value for money. He urged us, above all, to recognise the value of accurate anecdotal evidence from out of the way locations, and encouraged members to take a catholic interest in the whole environment.

Hence it was a great delight to the Chairman when he received a package last week from HMS *HERALD*. It contained a splendid Natural History diary, complete with coloured photographs and distribution maps, which had been compiled by Able Seaman Andrew Stephenson during detached survey duties in the archipelago of Diego Garcia. His efforts had been inspired by reading Colour Sergeant Peter Carr's report in our Golden Jubilee edition, and the diary arived just in time for a copy to reach our team for EXERCISE DIEGO SURVEY before their departure from UK.

This is a perfect illustration of the reason for RNBWS's existence, and I hope that we shall hear many more such happy stories of the attraction of new enthusiasts to our worthwhile and valuable pursuit.

DAVID DOBSON President

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

As I began to compose this Foreword, the final preparations were in hand for our RNBWS expedition to Diego Garcia. It is planned that the team will report the outcome of their work at the AGM on 5 December. EXERCISE DIEGO SURVEY is a most important step in achieving the vision of those members who have long desired to see RNBWS undertake an overseas field-trip of its own. It will be led by one of our own members who has extensive experience. Some of the team have been prepared in smaller, but no less demanding, undertakings such as last year's census work on Sanda. Pleasingly, the other members will be experiencing the challenges and rewards for the first time.

The setting is also important. It underlines our commitment to the maritime environment, and to island habitats. The expedition task has been developed and agreed with the local natural history group, and the results will greatly enhance the systematic record of birds in the archipelago. Finally, it is most pleasing that Diego Garcia is a location where individual RNBWS members have contributed significant observations in recent years.

All this makes me the more keen to redouble our ship-borne efforts. I hope that by the time you read this annual report all units on the RN Fleet Bridge Card will have been issued with Marine Mammal and Seabird Field Guides as part of the drive to build up the MOD Marine Biological Data-base. This has not been a

straight-forward process, and I have still not convinced many of my professional colleagues of the importance of seabirds as indicators of environmental information of operational significance. I would, therefore appeal to members, especially in warships, both to sharpen their own powers of observation and deduction, and to educate others. In short, we need to take the small print on our recording forms seriously. When we see seabirds, especially after a long sequence of entries reading "Nothing seen", we need to ask "Why?". Few vessels are as well equipped as warships with meteorological and oceanographic sensors with which to probe for answers. But finally, do not neglect the "Mark 1 eyeball"! RNBWS observers should be noted above all else for a sharp visual lookout, and an ability to record significant detail accurately and concisely.

MICHAEL BARRITT Chairman

EDITORIAL

After the extra large Golden Jubilee issue last year, it was with some trepidation that planning for this year began. It seemed unlikely there would be enough material to make a balanced report, but my worries were unfounded. Although the number of active members reporting from sea is still in decline, the annual seabird analysis by Dr Bill Bourne contains much of interest and value, and readers will also find several remarkable records in the landbird analysis. The survey report by Peter Carr and colleagues of Sunda and the two adjacent islands marks the first RNBWS organised venture of this sort of work and is a useful prelude for the more ambitious project this year in Diego Garcia - an initial report of which appears on page 86.

Paul Baker's article on Buchan Alpha (page 47) fulfills a long term hope to include something from a North Sea Oil Rig, and I am delighted to include Peter Jackson's computer analysis of Mediterranean landbird records, on page 38. But I am specially pleased with the two contributions from David Balance and Bill Porteous covering their experiences in the Humboldt Current, off Peru and Chile - this is an area from which previous records have been regrettably sparse, and illustrate just how little is known about some of these pelagic species.

The coastal waters of New Zealand is another area of high interest covered, with two papers. Chris Jowett is now our newly appointed RNBWS local representative, in New Zealand, and it is to be hoped that his observations will generate many more from this important sea area for rare and little known pelagic species.

I am also delighted to give long overdue publicity to the splendid conservation work by David Wingate, in the article (page 71), on Bermuda by Bill Bourne, and the recent fossil remains found there should be of special interest to palaeontologists.

The overall result is a rather thicker volume than usual and will, I hope, be well received by our readership. Sadly, space did not permit me to include another offering this year from the Black Sea by Gabriel Banica, and this has been held over until 1998.

Many thanks indeed to all contributors and observers for this edition. Good birdwatching for 1998, and please keep the material flowing in.

MICHAEL CASEMENT.

OBSERVATIONS OF SEABIRDS

By Dr W.R.P.Bourne

With the decline in British ships at sea there has been another fall in the series of observations, to twelve, one involving some interesting notes by Sam Alexander on a troopship over forty years ago. With the fall in current activity it seems useful to record such things, so do send along any back notes that you have, though if they are extensive it might be better to present them as an article; otherwise, send them in chronological order, with any incidental obervations on the same sheet.

Recent observations include two large series from the Antarctic, by Chris Patrick completing his tour on HMS *Endurance* early in 1995, and Kevin Morgan on a cruise ship at the end of that year, two more by Mark Cutts and David Balance off western South America, also discussed elsewhere in this *Sea Swallow*(p.51), more by Judith Pentreath on a yacht in the West Indies, and smaller contributions from many other parts of the world.

The following observers sent in records, since last year (sheets of notes received shown in brackets):

Mr S.M.D. Alexander, MV *Cheshire*, Suez-Seychelles and return, Aug-Sep 1955; SS *Humphrey Gale*, Port Said-Tripoli (Libya) Oct. 1955. (27).

Mr David K. Ballance, MS *Lublin* II, Panama-Valparaiso and return, Nov-Dec 1996 (4).

LSA Mark A. Cutts RN, HMS *Scylla*. Falklands-Valparaiso-Panana, Oct 1993 (7); HMS *Fearless*, off Portsrmouth, March, Devonport-Norfolk, Virginia- Wilmington N. Carolina-Puerto Rico-Martinique, Apr-June 1996 (6)

LSA M.A. Cutts and Lt Cdr M.G. Hudson RN, HMS *Fearless*, Portsmouth-Piraeus-Djibouti-Goa--Borneo, Jan-Mar 1997 (13).

Mr Stephen Hales. Coast of Goa, Nov 1996 (1).

Messrs Stephen Hales and Derek Hallett, MV *Bretagne*. Return trip Plymouth-Santander, 11-12 Oct 1996 (5); MV *Val de Loire*. Return trip Plymouth-Santander, 27-29 Oct 1996 (4).

Capt. Thomas Johannssen, MV *Anna Oldendorff*, Manila-S. Australia, Mar-Apr 1996 (1).

Mr Kevin Morgan, MV *Professor Multanovskiy*, four cruises: Ushuaia to Falklands, Antarctic Peninsula, Ushuaia; S. Georgia, Wedell Sea, S. Shetlands, Ushuaia; S Shetlands, Bransfield Strait, Ushuaia; S. Shetlands, Bransfield Strait, Ushuaia, Nov-Dec. 1995 (50 and supporting papers).

Lts. L Ohmann and M. Waldmann FGN, FGS *Freuburg*, Wilhelmshavn- Durres, Albania and return Oct 1996 (2).

LA(METOC) C. Patrick RN, HMS *Endurance*, Antarctic-Valparaiso-Antarctic-Falklands- Cape Town-Ascension-Canaries-Portsmouth, Jan-May 1995 (17).

Mrs Judith Pentreath, Racing Yacht *Makima*, Lesser Antilles, Feb 1997 (3).

LWEM A. Stockwell RN, HMS *Edinburgh*, Suez-Persian Gulf-Seyshelles-Durban, Aug-Dec 1996 (5).

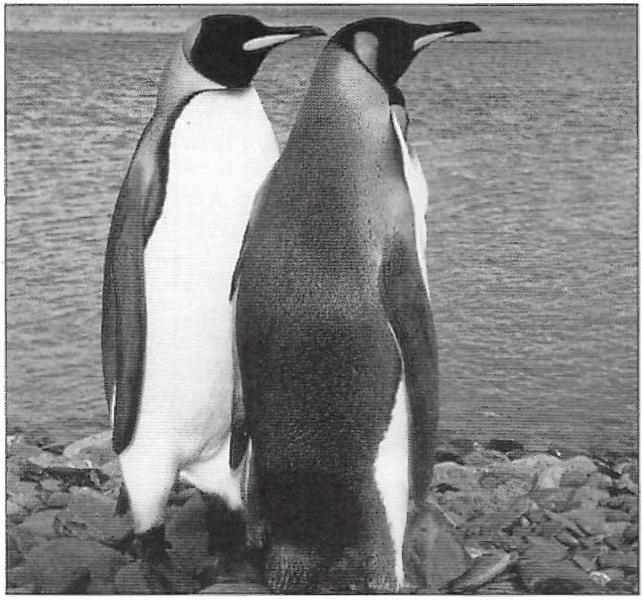
CPO (Comms) G.H. Walton & LH A.H. Todd, RFA *Fort Grange*, UK-New Jersey, USA-Scottish Waters, Apr-Jun 1996 (13)

NOTES ON SPECIES (All dates refer to 1996, unless otherwise stated)

DIVERS *Gaviidae*

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*. GHW & AHT saw two in Loch Eriboll, 19 June, and also large divers, either this or the next species, at 58.6°N 11.1° W and 58.6°N 5.7 °W. 8nm NE Lewis, on 14 and 16 June.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*. MAC & MGH flushed two possible birds at 50.4° N 0.9°W in the English Channel on 14 Jan'97.



King Penguins
South Georgia
February 1995
Photo: Chris Patrick

PENGUINS Spheniscidae

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. KM saw the first two at 54.2° S 47.8°W, 200nm west of South Georgia, on 3 Dec'95, small groups off Grytviken next day and the Bay Isles the day after, and 11 at 54.8°S 40.2°W in the Scotia Sea on the 6th.

Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri*. CP saw two at 64.2°S 55.4°W in the NW Weddell Sea on 10 Feb'95.

Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*. In late '95, KM saw a flock off Stanley in the Falklands on 21 Nov, some in the Bay of Isles, South Georgia on 5 Dec, and numbers off the Antarctic Peninsula, notably along the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 24-26 Nov and 23-24 Dec, (with a pale grey bird at Waterboat Point on 26th), and King George I. on 15th, a few breeding at Yankee Harbour on 18th, and Deception and Bellinghausen Is. with one at Half Moon I. on 23 Dec.

Adélie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. Between 1 Jan-12 Feb'95, CP regularly saw up to 60 in ten mins, often on ice, between 63.6-65°S and 52.1-56.7°W in the NW Weddell Sea; the first young bird appeared on 15 Jan. At the end of this year KM saw also birds in the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits and around the South Shetlands on the other side of the Antarctic Peninsula, with a small colony in Hope Bay in the Antarctic Sound, and a vast rookery of over

100,000 pairs on Paulet I. to the east, which had chicks on 17 Dec; birds were also breeding at Arctowski and Admiralty Bay.

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*. In '95, CP saw 49 in 10 mins at 62.9°S 57.6°W on 9 Feb, and 11 at 62.5°S 55.8°W on 16 Feb, in the NW Weddell Sea, and KM numbers along the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits at the end of the year, with 100,000s at Deception Island on 27 Nov, and chicks there and on Half Moon I. by 10 Dec, birds off the South Orkneys and South Shetlands on 8-17 Dec, and a few through the Antarctic Sound to Paulet I. on 17 Dec.

Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*. Sailing east in '95, KM saw groups from south of Staten I. to 54.8°S 61.5°W on 1 Dec, and at least three among penguins 120nm SSW C. Horn on 22 Dec.

Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus*. In '95, CP saw two on 1 March at 60.8°S 44.7°W off the South Orkneys, and KM small groups between 53.9°S 39.4°W and Grytviken, South Georgia, on 4th, five at about 57°S 63°W in the central Drake Strait on 14th, and three at 57.4°S 65.2°W nearby on 21 Dec.

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*. TJ saw a penguin presumably of this species, in Newcastle Roads, E Australia, on 6 Apr.

Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*. In '95, CP saw one at 55.0°S 58.3°W near the Burdwood Bank on 19 Feb, and KM birds off Ushaia and Stanley, 54.7°S 64.5°W between Ushuaia and Stanley on 18 Nov; and birds off Cape Horn on 20 Dec, and at 57°S 65°W in the Drake Strait on 22 Dec.

Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*. DKB saw 13 at 28.0°S 71.7°W off central Chile on 1 Dec, and another five at 29.4°S 71.7°W that evening.

ALBATROSSES *Diomedeidae*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Sailing north off Chile, MAC saw four at 48°S 76°W 18 Oct '93, and three at 44°S 75°W, seven at 39°S 75°W, and one at 35.4°S 73.3°W over the next three days. Early in '95, CP saw four at 57.8°S 63.1°W in the Drake Strait on 1 Feb, two at 62.9°S 57.6°W, south of the South Orkneys, on 8 and 9 Feb, 25 at 55.0°S 58.3°W on 19th and 13 at 55.6°S 53.7°W near the Burdwood Bank on 27th, three at 57.9°S 50.8°W near the South Orkneys on 28 Feb, ten at 54.1°S 36.5°W near South Georgia on 5 March, and on the way home birds at 51.5°S 30.8°W on 20 March, 38.8°S 15.1°W on 23rd and three at 36.4°S 7.2°W on 25 March. In late '95, KM saw six at 54.7°S 64.5°W in the Drake Strait on 18 Nov, one off Stanley in the Falklands on 21 Nov, up to 12 crossing the Burdwood Bank to the south next day, five entering the Beagle Channel on 29 Nov, up to three between Staten Island and 54.7°S 58.5°W over the Burdwood Bank on 1 Dec, up to six sailing along the Antarctic Convergence to 54.4°S 51.0°W next day, up to three 40nm ENE of the Shag Rocks on 3 Dec, and numbers off South Georgia over 4-5 Dec, with one at 55°S 42°W in the Scotia Sea on 6th. There was one in the Drake Strait on 11 Dec, at least ten on 14th, but fewer on 22 Dec, and several off the Beagle Channel on 20 Dec.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. Early in '95, CP reported birds unusually far south at 59.7°S 60.3°W off the South Shetlands on 31 Jan. and 57.8°S 63.1°W in the Drake Strait next day, describing them as having the wings mainly dark with variable white on the leading edge, and a dark line on the bill in one case. At the end of the year, KM saw up to three at 54.2°S 57.7°W south of the Burdwood Bank on 22 Nov, one entering the Beagle

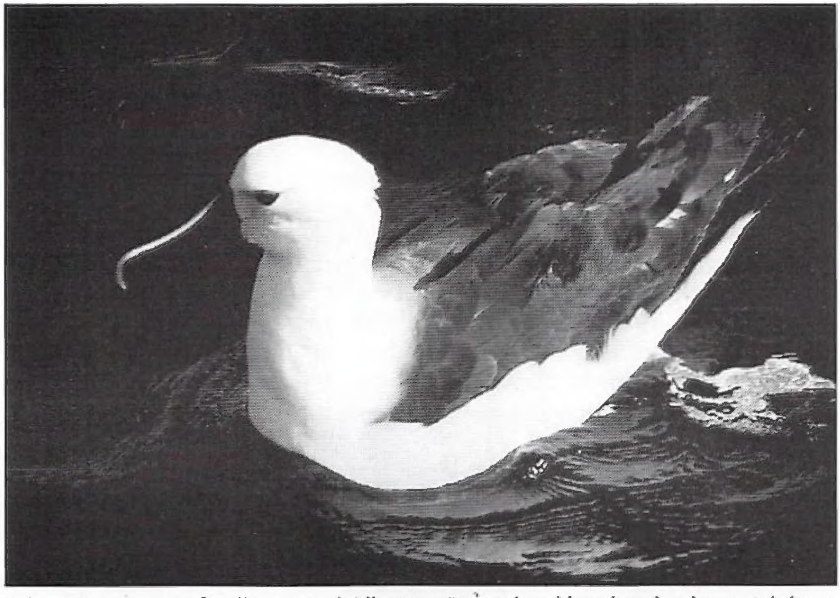
Channel on 29 Nov, up to six of the nominate race between Staten I. and 54.7°S 58.5°W on the Burdwood Bank on 1 Dec, one between there and 54.4°S 51.0°W next day, one at 54.1°S 44.3°W on the way to South Georgia on 3rd, one at 55.9°S 65.5°W in the Drake Strait on 14th, and one 5 nm off Cape Horn, on 20 Dec.

Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata*. DKB saw over 50 at 3.5°S 80.7°W off Ecuador on 23 Nov, 100 at 6.2°S 80.5°W next day, and lesser numbers to 11.7°S 77.9°W off Peru on 7 Nov. Returning north he saw 26 at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec and then up to 55 to 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.

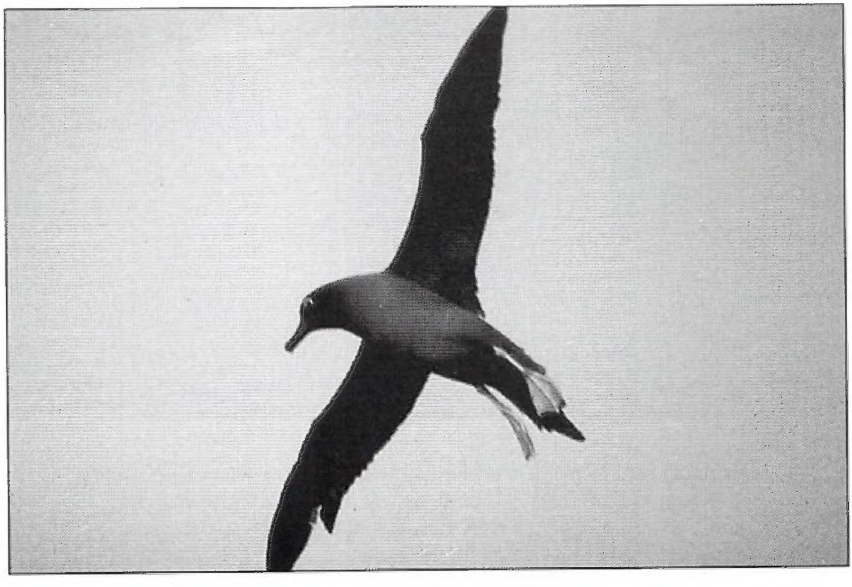
Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Leaving the Falklands, MAC saw individuals at 51°S 59°W on 15 Oct '93 and up to four at 52°S 66°W next day, then 15 at 53°S 66°W approaching the Magellan Strait on 17th, and occasional birds north up the coast of Chile to 35.4°S 73.3°W on 20 Oct. In '95, CP and KM saw a great many between 51-63°S and 31-71°W, with maxima of 230 in 20 mins. at 54.1°S 70.9°W in the western approaches to the Magellan Strait on 6 Feb, and hundreds 5nm off Cape Horn on 20 Dec, and the most southerly birds in the Gerlache Strait on 25-26 Nov.

Nominate race of Shy (or White-capped) Albatross *Diomedea c. cauta*.
Adult, at shelf edge off East coast of Tasmania, October 1988
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. CP saw 58 in 30 mins. at 37.0°S 12.6°W near Tristan on 24 March '95, and one at 34.6°S 11.2°E on 28th.



Indian Ocean race of Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos bassi*. Adult, at 37.6°S 139.2°E, off Robe S.Australia,3 March 1992.
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN



Light-mantled Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata* in wing-moult, at 56°S 153°E, Australian sector of the Southern Ocean, 7 Nov. 1996.
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

Buller's Albatross ***Diomedea bulleri***. KM described one seen one with hundreds of Black-browed Albatrosses 5nm off Cape Horn on 20 Dec '95. DKB reported two at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov '96, 18.5°S 74.0°W on 28th, and 23.7°S 70.7°W on 30th, 17 at 28.0°S 71.7°W and 75 at 29.4°S 71.7°W on 1 Dec, 4 at 30.3°S 72,3°W on 4th, and birds at 18.3°S 76.0°W and 16.6°S 76.7°W on 6 Dec. (Some were adults, with which he was already familiar, but since he only identified one other mollymawk some may be included among the young ones?).

Grey-headed Albatross ***Diomedea chrysostoma***. CP saw one at 57.8°S 63.1°W in the Drake Strait on 1 Feb '95, and three at 55.6°S 53.7°W 7.5°C off the Falklands on 27 Feb. KM had up to three on 17 occasions between 54-61°S 40-66°W in Nov and Dec '95, the most southerly off Deception I. on 27 Nov. DKB saw one at 29.0°S 72.5°W off Chile on 4 Dec '96.

Sooty Albatross ***Phoebetria fusca***. CP saw one at 37.0°S 12.6°W near Tristan on 24 March'95.

Light-mantled Albatross ***Phoebetria palpebrata***. CP saw one at 59.7°S 60.3°W in the Drake Strait on 31 Jan '95 and two at 54.1°S 36.5°W off South Georgia on 5 March. KM saw up to three on ten occasions between 54-62°S and 39-65°W in Nov-Dec '95, with five off the Bay of Isles, South Georgia on 5 Dec, and the most southerly at 62.5°S 59.8°W in the Boyd Strait, South Shetlands, on 10 Dec.

FULMARS *Fulmarinae*

Southern Giant Petrel ***Macronectes giganteus***. In '93, MAC saw 16 at 52°S 59°W when leaving the Falklands on 16 Oct, 12 at 52°S 67°W next day, two at 53°S 73°W in the Magellan Strait on the 17th., eight at 48°S 76°W on the 19th., six at 39°S 75°W on the 20th, and one at 35.4°S 73.3°W on the 21st. and 22°S 75°W on the 27th. In '95, CP saw up to seven on 15 occasions between 51-65°S and 31-71°W in Jan-March, also 14 at the most southerly location, 65.4°S 55.1°W in the Weddell Sea on 11 Feb, and 118 at 54.1°S 70.9°W in the Magellan Strait on 6 Feb. Later in this year KM saw up to 25 on 34 occasions between 54-61°S 39-66°W in Nov-Dec, with over 40 off New Island in the Falklands on 19 Nov, and the most southerly in the Gerlache Strait on 25 Nov. There were occasional white birds in the south. One seen in the Drake Strait on 22 Dec had blue line dangling from its bill.

Northern Giant Petrel ***Macronectes halli***. In '95, CP reported one at 62.5°S 55.8°W off the South Shetlands on 16 Feb, seven at 55.6°S 53.7°W in the Scotia Sea on 27 Feb, and three at 51.5°S 30.8°W NE of South Georgia on 20 March and KM one at 54.8°S 60.5°W on the Burdwood Bank on 1 Dec, two at 54.8°S 60.5°W on the way to South Georgia next day, more offshore there on 4-5th, probables at 55°S 42°W 70 nm to the SW on 6th, and an immature just east of Cape Horn on 20 Dec.

Northern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialis***. GHW & AHT reported over 100 at 49.8°N 5.0°W in the mouth of the English Channel on 16 Apr, and MAC saw two at 49.2°N 8.3°W, 120nm SW Lands End, next day. GHW & AHT saw 20 at 52.4°N 15.1°W, west of Ireland, on 5 June, and again at 56.2°N 8.1°W, 50nm SSW Barra, on 11th, and 90 at 57°N 9°W next day.

Southern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialoides***. In '93, MAC saw one at 52°S 67°W on 16 Oct, and 53°S 73°W in the Magellan Strait next day, six at 48°S 76°W on 18th, and one at 44°S 75°W and 35.4°S 73.3°W over the next three days. In '95, CP saw three at 63.0°S 57.3°W off the South Shetlands on 17 Jan., and 12 at 63.6°S 56.5°W nearby on 27th., and KM up to 20 between 53-62°S and 48-65°W on 24 occasions in Nov-Dec, with good numbers off Elephant I. on 8 Dec. and 80 in the Gerlache Strait on 24 Dec.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialoides* at 57°S 155°E, Australian sector of the Southern Ocean, 9 Nov 1996.
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. In '95, CP saw 17 at 64.2°S 55.4°W in the NE Weddell Sea on 10 Feb and a group of 11 feeding at the windward edge of an ice flow by sitting on the water pecking at the surface at 65.4°S 55.1°W nearby next day, and KM saw a flock of 40 east of Deception I. on 24 Nov, four in the Boyd Strait to the west on 27th, one with Fin Whales at 58.3°S 47.4°W in the Scotia Sea on 7 Dec, birds at 60.8°S 53.5°W by Elephant I. next day and in the Boyd Sound on 11 Dec, two off Deception I. again on 18th, and up to three with Cape Petrels following the ship in the Drake Strait from 61.3°S 58.4°W to 58.9°S 62.8°W on 19 Dec.
Cape Petrel ***Daption capense***. In '93, MAC saw one at 52°S 59°W leaving the Falklands on 15 Oct, 15 at 52°S 67°W next day, 20 at 53°S 73°W in the Magellan Strait on 17th, 25 at 48°S 76°W next day, 200 at 44°S 76°W on 19th, 32 at 39°S 75 W next day, 12 at 35°N 73°W on 21st, and one at 27.9°S 73.3°W on 26 Oct. In '95, CP saw them 14 times between 58-64°S and 55-63°W on Jan-Feb, with a maximum of 115 in ten mins at 63.6°S 56.3°W in the South Shetlands on 18 Jan, and KM saw them 29 times between 54-62°S and 39-65°W in Nov-Dec, with up to 45 at sea and 250 on an iceberg at

59.3°S 50.1°W in Scotia Sea on 7 Dec, and 100 at 61°S 58°W in the South Shetlands on 19 Dec.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. In '95, CP saw them 12 times between 64-65°S and 50-57°W in the NW Weddell Sea in Jan.-Feb, with maxima of 140 at 63.6°S 56.7°W on 23 Jan, 72 at 64.2°S 55.4°W feeding by walking into wind with their wings raised picking at the surface on 10 Feb, and 155 at 65.4°S 55.1°W next day feeding by standing on the low windward edge of an ice flow with their wings raised, leaning forward into the wind pecking at the sea surface and ice edge. KM also saw them 24 times between 54-65°S and 39-64°W in Nov-Dec, including one with the Cape Petrels on an iceberg at 59.3°S 50.1°W in the Scotia Sea on 7 Dec.

Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostris*. This species appears to disperse to the south in the winter, where it has often been reported as a "dark petrel" and sometimes identified as the Great-winged Petrel in the past. In '95, CP saw five at 57.9°S 50.8°W near the South Orkneys on 28 Feb, and KM a "dark petrel" at 54.8°S 57.5°W on the Burdwood Bank on 22 Nov, three possible Kerguelen Petrels 10nm off Cape Horn on 29 Nov, and single "dark petrels" at 54.8°S 61.0°W on the Burdwood Bank on 1 Dec, and 54.2°S 46.8°W, 40nm ENE of the Shag Rocks, two days later.

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*. In '95, CP saw 15 prions thought to be this species at 59.7°S 60.3°W off the South Shetlands on 31 Jan, one at 62.9°S 57.6°W in the NW Wedell Sea on 9 Feb, 50 at 55.0°S 58.3°W near the Falklands on 19 Feb, two at 60.8°S 44.7°W near the South Orkneys on 1 Mar, 22 at 54.7°S 39.0°W near South Georgia on 10 Mar (one which came on board had a length of 297mm and wingspan 633mm and weighed 142 g.) and 15 more on board at 54.2°S 36.5°W near there on 3 Mar. KM also reported them 14 times between 54-62°S and 36-65°W in Nov-Dec, with maxima of hundreds 40nm ENE of the Shag Rocks, and off South Georgia on 3-4 Dec, and thousands at 54.8°S 40.2°W in the Scotia Sea on 6 Dec. Unidentified prions reported by CP at 59.7°S 60.3°W on 31 Jan. and KM near Elephant I. on 8 Dec may also have been this species.

Narrow-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*. In '95, CP saw 12 and had three on board at 51.9°S 58.2°W two miles off East Cove in the Falklands on 26 Feb (length 263-264mm and wingspan 583-592mm); he saw another seven at 54.7°S 39.0°W off South Georgia on 3 March. KM saw small numbers ten times between 53-61°S and 39-65°W in Nov-Dec. Several prions seen by KM approaching the Beagle Channel on 20 Dec may also have been this species.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*. In '95, CP described five seen at 57.8°S 63.1°W in the Drake Strait on 1 Feb, and KM reported one at 54.8°S 57.5°W on the Burdwood Bank on 22 Nov and 2-3 off South Georgia on 4 Dec.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. In '95, KM saw three at 54.4°S 57.6°W while crossing Burdwood Bank on 22 Nov, 2-3 possible birds approaching King George I. on 23rd, up to 30 in the approaches to the Beagle Channel on 29th, single birds at 54.4°S 51.0°W leaving the Burdwood Bank on 2 Dec and 54.0°S 42.8°W the next day, several off South Georgia on 4-5 Dec, and at 55°S 42°W in the Scotia Sea on 6th, one at 58°S 48°W the next day and 1-2 at 60°S 62°W on 11th, many in the approaches to the Beagle Channel on 20th, over 100 at 58°S 64°W on 22 Dec., and small numbers passing Smith and Deception Is. to visit the Gerlache Strait the next day.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. In '95, CP saw 12 at 37.0°S

12.6°W near Tristan on 24 March, two at 35.2°S 5.2°E on 27th, twelve at 34.6°S 11.2°E on 28th, and one at 34.1°S 16.6°E on 29 March and 33.7°S 18.1°E on 7 Apr.

Atlantic Petrel ***Pterodroma incerta***. In '95, CP saw one at 47.0°S 24.9°W on 21 March, and KM reported two near 54.5°S 54°W when leaving the Burdwood Bank on 2 Dec. and a possible bird at 57.7°S 63.0°W in the Drake Strait on 14 Dec.

Soft-plumaged Petrel ***Pterodroma mollis***. In '95, CP saw five at 55.0°S 58.3°W on 19 Feb, two at 55.6°S 53.7°W on 27th, 13 at 57.9°S 50.8°W on 28th, all near the Burdwood Bank, then seven at 51.5°S 30.8°W north of South Georgia on 20 March, two at 47.0°S 24.9°W on 21st and 38.8°S 15.1°W on 23rd, and 14 at 37.0°S 12.6°W near Tristan on 24 March. KM saw at least eight from 54.6°S 55.5°W to 54.4°S 51.7°W on sailing east from the Burdwood Bank on 2 Dec, 15 (including one in the dark phase) from 54.2°S 47.8°W to 40nm ENE of the Shag Rocks next day, one at 54.8°S 40.2°W in the Scotia Sea on 6th, and possible birds at 56.9°S 65.4°W on 22 Dec.

Capped Petrel ***Pterodroma hasitata***. GHW & AHT saw two at 33.6°N 76.3°W off the Carolinas on 11 May, and again at 34.1°N 76.0°W two days later, and DKB one just out of sight of Dominican Republic when leaving the Mona Passage to the south on 10 Nov.

Dark-rumped Petrel ***Pterodroma phaeopygia***. DKB saw one at 0.2°S 81.0°W off Ecuador on 23 Dec.

Juan Fernández Petrel ***Pterodroma externa***. DKB saw one at 16.6°S 76.7°W off Peru on 6 Dec.

Stejneger's Petrel ***Pterodroma longirostris***. DKB saw a small gadfly petrel commonly west of the Humboldt Current which he describes as brownish-grey above with a darker cap, occasional white at the side of the tail, and white underparts with blackish-brown edges to the underwing which ran back as a dark line from the central forewing to the axilla, which he thinks must be this species, already reported there by Chris Patrick in April '93 *(Sea Swallow* 44: 8). The first six were seen at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov., and scores on most days at sea south to 30.3°S 72.3°W on 4 Dec., when the maximum of 200 occurred in the afternoon, and then back to 16.6°S 76.7°W on 6 Dec. This is a little surprising, since it was scarce between Valparaiso and Juan Fernández in June 1983, when it was replaced by de Filippi's Petrel *P. defilippiana* near the coast and the Juan Fernández Petrel was commoner out at sea (personal observation), but possibly these were migrants and had gone by June?

Bulwer's Petrel ***Bulweria bulwerii***. CP saw two at 21.7°S 2.0°E on 10 Apr '95, and one at 17.9°S 2.7°W, east of St Helena, next day, GHW & AHT nine possible birds in five hours. at 41.3°N 36.7°W, west of the Azores, on 21 Apr '96, and MAC & MGH one at 39.0°N 10.6°W on 19 Jan. '97. It seems most likely that a bird seen at 49.2°N 7.5°W, SW of the Scillies, on 3 Aug 1988, and identified as a large *Oceanodroma* discussed elsewhere (pp 77-78) was a moulting immature of this species.

Jouanin's Petrel ***Bulweria fallax***. AS saw up to four continually along the south coast of the Yemen and Oman during 27-30 Aug '96. On 17 Aug '55, SMDA also saw "sooty brown shearwaters" between 12.4°N 48.33°E and Cape Guardafui, Somalia, which seem likely to have been this species, not described then, as do others identified as Wedge-tailed Shearwaters off Cape

Guardafui on 27 Aug, and similar birds reported by MAC & MGH at 14.4°N 42.1°W on 9 Feb '97, 12.7°N 50.9°W and 12.9°N 52.1°W next day, and 13.1°N 55.9°W, 12.4°N 59.8°W and 11.7°N 63.6°W over the following three days.

SHEARWATERS *Procellariinae*

White-chinned Petrel ***Procellaria aequinoctialis***. Reported between 26-62°S and 18°E 63°W ten times by CP in Feb-Apr '95, with a maximum of 22 off South Georgia on 5 March, when one bird soared to *ca* 700 ft. in a thermal, higher than the albatrosses - extending NE on the homeward voyage to five at 25.6°S 7.1°E on 9 Apr; and by KM on 12 occasions in Nov-Dec '95, with a similar maximum of 30 off South Georgia on 4 Dec - these extended south to near King George I. on 23 Nov and 15 Dec and Elephant I. on 6 Dec, with some off the Beagle Channel on the evening of 29 Nov, where they may breed. In '96, DKB saw 100 at 3.5°S 80.7°W in the winter quarters off Ecuador on 23 Nov, up to 18 south to 28.0°S 71.7°W on 1 Dec., and then 30 again at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec, when returning north.

Spectacled Petrel ***Procellaria (aequinoctialis?) conspicillata***. There seems a case for treating this form as a distinct species, though it seems desirable to know more about it first. On the way home in '95, CP saw individuals at 36.4°S 7.2°W (18.6°C) on 25 Mar, and 29.6°S 12.4°E (19.4°C) on 8 Apr.

Cory's Shearwater ***Calonectris diomedea***. DH & SH saw two at *ca* 43.5°N 4°W off Santander on 12 Oct '92. In '95, CP saw birds on the way home off South Africa at 34.1°S 16.6°E on 29 March, 33.7°S 18.1°E on 7 Apr and 29.6°S 12.4°E on 8 Apr, and near the Canaries at 28.6°N 15.1°W on 29 Apr. In '96, MAC saw 12 at 39.9°N 36.9°W west of the Azores on 21 Apr, and one at 19.5°N 66.2°W approaching the West Indies on 25th. GHW & AHT also saw 40 in five hours at 41.3°N 36.7°W west of the Azores and then 25 at 40.0°N 39.5°W on 21 Apr, 16 in two hours at 39.8°N 42.7°W next day, six at 33.4°N 76.0°W on 10 May, 42.0°N 60.8°W on 30 May and 41.0°N 50.3°W on 1 June off the eastern USA, and birds at 47.1°N 33.4°W and 47.7°N 30.0°W north of the Azores on 3 June. LO & MW saw four at 38.1°N 9.1°E off Tunisia on 14 Oct. While Porter *et al.* (1997) report that they saw large numbers of the local form *edwardsi* (treated as a distinct species) off Cape Verde in October 1995 and 1996, they omit to consider that the intermediate Mediterranean nominate race *diomedea* normally migrates past there in autumn (Mougin *et al.* 1988), and indeed birds of this type also seen by Bill Curtis at 38.6°S (not N as given) 53.5°W off Argentina on 17 Feb 1992 *(Sea Swallow* 43: 25) may also have belonged to this form.

Great Shearwater ***Puffinus gravis***. On the way home in March '95, CP saw nine at 38.8°S 15.1°W on the 23rd, 21 at 37.0°S 12.6°W off Tristan on the 24th, and three at 36.4°S 7.2°W on the 25th. In the North Atlantic, GHW & AHT saw one at 47.1°N 33.4°W on 3 June '96, and LO & MW 200 off Ushant on 20 Oct.

Pink-footed Shearwater ***Puffinus creatopus***. Off western South America, DKB saw the first possible bird at 6.8°N 79.8°W on 16 Nov, two at 14.0°S 76.4°W on the 17th, four at 23.7°S 70.7°W on the 30th, two at 30.3°S 72,3°W on 4 Dec, three at 11.9°S 77.8°W on the 7th., two at 9.3°S 79.5°W and then one at 8.1°S 80.1°W on the 14th, and two at 5.0°S 81.3°W on the 16th.

Sooty Shearwater ***Puffinus griseus***. It has recently been widely reported that

Veit *et al.* (1997) calculate that five million birds feeding over the California current system have declined by nine-tenths following a rise in water temperature between 1987-94, and speculated that this indicates a similar reduction in their numbers. A similar decline has also been noticed when the water temperature rose in the past (Briggs *et al.* 1987), and it also seems possible that the birds have moved further north or returned south unusually early, so that it would be useful to have any observations of what has happened to them.

In the Southern Ocean, in '95, CP saw two at 57.8°S 63.1°W on 1 Feb, three at 54.9°S 67.3°W in the Drake Strait next day, 53 at 54.1°S 70.9°W in the Magellan Strait on 6 Feb and 950, mainly in two large flocks, at *ca* 52°S 58°W off the Falklands on 21 Feb, while KM saw birds between 53-58°S 39-65°W on 11 occasions in Nov-Dec, including at least 50 at 53.3°S 63.3°W on 18 Nov, hundreds around Cape Horn on 29 Nov, declining numbers eastwards from there to one at 53.9°S 39.4°W west of South Georgia on 4 Dec, and thousands mainly flying west off Cape Horn on 20 Dec. Further north, in the Pacific, MAC saw one at 44°S 76°W on 19 Oct '93, and DKB saw the first at 0.3°S 80.8°W on 17 Nov '96, 20 at 3.5°S 80.7°W on 23rd, at least 600 at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 300 at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24th; then lesser numbers to Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, and returning north until 360 at 9.3°S 79.5°W and then 1790 at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14th, and the last at 3.3°S 80.6°W on the 16th, and at 1.5°N 80.8°W on 23 Dec.

In the eastern North Atlantic, SH & DH saw two off Ushant on 11 Oct'92, and to the west, GHW & AHT saw one at 33.5°N 76.0°W on 3 May '96 and 40.8°N 66.6°W on 29 May, and six at 42.0°N 60.8°W on 30 May.

Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatis*. On 23 Nov '96, DKB saw ten uniformly dark brown shearwaters, about the size of a Manx, with shorter wings than adjacent Sooty Shearwaters, at 3.5°S 80.7°W *ca* 30-50nm off Tumbes, north Peru. The only possible identification appears to be the Christmas Shearwater of the central Pacific, which is known to follow the equatorial counter-current to the area west of the Galapagos, though this is a new species for South America.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*. SH and DH saw three at *ca* 43.5°N off Santander on 12 Oct '92, and CP two small shearwaters which were blackish brown above and dirty brown below with paler bellies and under-wings at 28.6°N 15.1°W, between the Canaries, on 29 Apr '95, with another at 34.3°N 13.1°W next day. On 22 Jan '97, MAC & MGH reported a "Levantine Shearwater" without a description at 34.8°N 7.4°W off the Atlantic coast of Morocco, with 11 at 37.0°N 12.0°W next day. A "Manx Shearwater" that they reported at *ca* 36.0°N 5.2°W on 20 Jan. may also have been this species, which appears to winter in the eastern North Atlantic when the Manx Shearwaters move south.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. GHW & AHT saw one at 30.7°N 71.1°W on 28 Apr, six at 32.4°N 76.8°W on 3 May, and two at 41.0°N 50.3°W on 1 June in the western North Atlantic, and at least 15 at 55.6°N 6.7°W off Islay on 11 June, 50 at 58.6°N 11.1°W and 200 at 59.0°N 6.1° north of Lewis on 14th, and 60 at 58.7°N 6.3°W in the North Minch on 16th. KM reports that a "black and white shearwater", possibly this species, was seen by Derek Scott at 58.4°S 47.9°W in the Scotia Sea on 7 Dec '95.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*. In the western North Atlantic,

GHW & AHT saw seven at 34.2°N 73.3°W on 1 May '96, and MAC & MGH one at 17.7°N 39.9°W on 5 Feb '97. DKB saw five at 6.2°S 80.5°W off northern Peru on 24 Nov '96 and one at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. KM reports F.M. Gauntlett saw a small black and white shearwater with a fluttery flight which was the same size as nearby prions at 54.6°S 56.2°W near the Burdwood Bank on 2 Dec '95.

DIVING-PETRELS *Pelecanoidinae*

Peruvian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides garnoti*. DKB saw single birds at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, and 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.

Magellan Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides magellani*. CP described two seen at 54.1°S 70.9°W in the western approaches to the Magellan Strait on 6 Feb '95 as mottled above with a partial collar; KM also saw one off Cape Horn on 29 Nov, and up to 20 in the approaches to Ushuaia in Nov-Dec.

Georgian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*. CP measured 20 unidentified diving-petrels which came on board in Cumberland Bay, South Georgia, on the night of 5-6 Mar '95, where this species has been collected in the past. Their length was 210-225 (217.5) mm, wingspan 403-437 (414.8) mm, wing 119-132 (124.2) mm, tail 35-44 (39.3) mm, bill 14-17 (15.4) mm, tarsus 25-28 (26.3) mm and middle toe 29-34 (31.2) mm, and they weighed 120-160 (131.2) gm; it would be useful to have sketches of the shape of the nostrils and arch of the lower jaw and foot-markings of such birds. KM thought at least one of a number of diving-petrels seen between 54.8°S 40.2°W and 56.3°S 43.3°W in the Scotia Sea on 6 Dec '95 and a group of five seen at 59.7°S 64.7°W in the Drake Strait on 11 Dec. were this species.

Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. In '95, CP reported one at 59.7°S 60.3°W north of the South Shetlands on 31 Jan., describing it as having a dark blacky-brown back, slightly paler brown wings, no pale scapulars, and the underwing tinged brownish. He saw another at 57.8°S 63.1°W in the Drake Strait on 1 Feb, seven at 55.0°S 58.3°W south of the Falklands on 19th, an unidentified diving-petrel at 57.9°S 50.8°W north of the South Orkneys on 28 Feb, and six Common Diving-petrels at 54.7°S 39.0°W SW of South Georgia on 3 March; and one came on board at 54.2°S 36.5°W nearby on 10 Mar. KM saw several diving-petrels between Staten Island and the Shag Rocks on 3 Dec, and from 57.6°S 46.1°W to 59.3°S 50.1°W in the Scotia Sea on 6 Dec.

STORM-PETRELS *Hydrobatidae*

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. In the Indian Ocean, SMDA saw the first storm-petrels at 21.3°N 38.1°E in the central Red Sea on 14 Aug '55 and 30-60 at 16.6°N 41.0°E in the southern Red Sea next day; he had two on board at 2300, one with a wing of 146mm and yellow webs, which implies that it came from the small subantarctic populations. There were rafts of several thousand with floating weed near the Strait of Bab el Mandeb on the 16th, and then many in wake on the way to Aden, and small numbers off Aden again on 31Aug. Sailing round the south coast of Arabia, AS saw two at 13°N 47.5°E on 28 Aug '96, one at 16.5°N 55.2°E On 30 Aug, and 16 at 21.5°N 59.5°E next day. In the south, CP saw up to seven on ten occasions between 47-64°S and 25-60°W in Jan-Mar '95, with the most southerly at 64.0°S 56.4°W in the NW Weddell Sea on 1 Jan, and individials to 21.7°S

2.0°E on 10 Apr on the way north. On 11 Feb, some were feeding by "walking on the water" at the windward edge of an ice floe, and on 14 Feb one was feeding around seven Minke Whales at dusk. KM also saw small numbers everywhere between 53-65°S and 39-65°W on 29 occasions in Nov-Dec '95, and noted that they were breeding on Paulet I. on 17 Dec. DKB also saw small numbers off the west coast of South America between 6-30°S 23 times in Nov-Dec '96, with 500 at 6.2°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov and 271 at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.

Elliot's Storm-petrel ***Oceanites gracilis***. DKB saw one at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.

Grey-backed Storm-petrel ***Garrodia nereis***. CP reports LS(R) Rob Clark found one aboard HMS *Marlborough*, apparently off the Falklands, early on 23 Feb '95; its overall length was 160mm and wingspan 344mm. He saw four at 51.9°S 58.2°W on 26 Feb, and KM saw two feeding over kelp in the approaches to Stanley on 21 Nov. and up to 30 between Staten Island and 54.7°S 58.5°W on 1 Dec.

White-bellied Storm-petrel ***Fregetta grallaria***. On the way north in '95, CP saw a *Fregetta* storm-petrel with a white belly at 51.5°S 30.8°W on 20 March, and three at 37.0°S 12.6°W near Tristan on 24th. KM and Derek Scott also saw one at 54.4°S 52.4°W, west of the Burdwood Bank, on 2 Dec which, in addition to having a white belly, seemed smaller and greyer on the back than Black-bellied Storm-petrels. DKB saw three at 30.3°S 72.3°W off Chile on 4 Dec '96 and five at 23.2°S 74.3°W next day.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel ***Fregetta tropica***. In '95, CP saw small numbers between 47-63°S and 25-63°W on seven occasions in Jan-March, with a maxumum of 16 at 54.7°S 39.0°W on 3 March. Four came on board in Cumberland Bay on the night of 5-6 March, (length 204-216mm, wingspan 444-458mm and weight 42-54 gm.), and three more at 54.2°S 36.5°W offshore on 10th. KM saw them nearly everywhere between 54-62°S and 40-65°W on 17 occasions in Nov-Dec.

British Storm-petrel ***Hydrobates pelagicus***. GHW & AHT saw at least five at 55.6°N 6.7°W off Islay on 11 June, at least ten at 56.2°N 8.1°W 50nm SSW Barra on 11th, and five at 59.0°N 6.1°W 30nm N. Lewis on 14 th. LO & MW saw ten probable birds off Ushant on 20 Oct.

Madeiran Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma castro***. CP saw two at 1.4°S 16.0°W on 18 Apr '95, four at 4.9°N 16.7°W on 19th, and one at 15.0°N 17.9°W on 21st, described as having the white rump straighter across than Leach's Storm-petrel, a slightly paler greater covert bar, the tail slightly forked without projecting feet, the wings less pointed than in Leach's Storm-petrel and held forward and bent at the carpal joint, and flying with fairly long zig-zagging shearwater-like glides broken by several shallow wing-beats.

Leach's Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma leucorhoa***. In the western North Atlantic, GHW & AHT saw ten at 9.6°N 48.6°W on 23 Apr, three at 38.9°N 44.8°W next day, two at 38.8°N 62.8°W on 25 Apr, one at 35.0°N 75.0°W on 14 May, six at 42.0°N 60.8°W on 30th, and two at 41.0°N 56.4°W on 31 May. In the Bay of Biscay, SH & DH saw one at *ca* 49°N 5°W on 27 Oct., five at *ca* 43.5°N 4°W on 28th, and one at 48°N 5°W on 29th.

Markham's Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma markhami***. DKB saw birds off western South America on ten occasions in Nov-Dec, including 200 at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov, at least 300 at 18.5°S 74.0°W on 28th, and lesser numbers

to 24.0°S 74.5°W on 5 Dec (see p52). A useful account of this group of large, black Pacific storm-petrels also including the next species is provided by Force (1997)

Black Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma melania***. DKB saw at least two at 0.2°S 81.0°W on 23 Dec.

Hornby's Storm-petrel ***Oceanodroma hornbyi***. DKB saw 200 at 15.3°S 75.7°W off Peru on 27 Nov, four at 16.6°S 76.7°W on 6 Dec., several at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7th, and 32 at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.

TROPICBIRDS *Phaethontidae*

Red-billed Tropicbird ***Phaethon aethereus***. Off western South America, DKB saw one at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov '96 and 18.5°S 74.0°W next day, two at 16.6°S 76.7°W on 6 Dec and one at 0.2°S 81.0°W on 23 Dec. In the West Indies, JP saw three at 16.9°N 61.7°W in English Harbour, Antigua, and one at 17°N 62°W on 8 Feb '97, three at 17.2°N 62.7°W and six at 17.9°N 62.7°W at St. Barthelémy on 10th and 11th, and at Crocus Bay, Anguilla on 12-16 Feb. MAC & MGH saw two at 12.4°N 59.8°W on 12 Feb., one at 11.7°N 63.6°W next day and two at 11.2.°N 70.7°W and then 14.4°N 72.0°W on 15 Feb.

Yellow-billed Tropicbird ***Phaethon lepturus***. On 24 May '96 MAC saw one at 19.9°N 66.4°W off the West Indies, and on 2 Mar '97 MAC & MGH one at 4.3°N 111.8°E in the South China Sea.

PELICANS *Pelecanidae*

Brown Pelican ***Pelecanus occidentalis***. Off western South America, DKB saw over a thousand in Guayaquil Roads on 18 Nov, a few at 3.5°S 80.7°W on 23 Nov, hundreds in Paita Harbour on 15 Nov, 70 at 5.0°S 81.3°W and 164 at 3.3°S 80.6°W 164 on 16 Dec, over 500 at 3.2°S 80.3°W next day, and 200 at 1.5°S 80.8°W in Panama Roads on 25 Dec. In the West Indies, JP saw two and 15-20 on the rocks at 18.0°N 63.1°W between St. Maarten and St. Barthelémy on 4 Feb, one at 16.9°N 61.7°W in English Harbour, Antigua on 7 Feb, six at 17°N 62°W next day, three at 17.9°N 62,7°W off St Barthelemy on 9-10th, eight at 18.0°N 63.1°W next day and 13 in Crocus Bay, Anguilla during 12-16 Feb.

Peruvian Pelican ***Pelecanus thagus***. DKB saw many at 6.2°S 80.5°W and hundreds at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov, many at Callao next day, five at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, hundreds at Antofagasta on 29-30 Nov, four at 28.0°S 71.7°W and eight at 29.4°S 71.7°W on 1 Dec., many at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, 18 at 11.9°S 77.8°W and 256 at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7th, hundreds in Huacho Roads on 7-13th, and 119 at 9.3°S 79.5°W and 189 at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14 Dec.

GANNETS and BOOBIES *Sulidae*

Northern Gannet ***Morus bassanus***. CP saw one at 24.7°N 16.5°W off West Africa on 23 Apr '95 and 14 at 48.7°N 5.7°W off the English Channel on 3 May. In this area GHW & AHT also saw over 50 around a fishing vessel at 49.8°N 5.0°W on 16 Apr '96 and MAC 11 at 49.2°N 8.3°W, 120nm SW Lands End, next day. Off Ireland, GHW & AHT saw 30 at 52.4°N 15.1°W on 5 June, and off the Hebrides at least 25 at 55.6°N 6.7°W, 20 at 56.2°N 8.1°W, and 500 diving at 56.4°N 8.2°W on 11 June, 40 at 56.9°N 8.9°W and 50 at

56.8°N 9.0°W on 12th, 1,000 on the water and 300 in the air around a fishing fleet at 57.1°N 8.9°W on 13th, 300 at 59.0°N 6.1°W, on 14th, and 200 at 58.5°N 6.6°W on 20 June. Across the Atlantic, they saw one at 33.9°N 74.7°W on 1 May and MAC four at 34.5°N 77.2°W off the Carolinas on 10 May.

Cape Gannet ***Morus capensis***. CP saw three at 34.1°S 16.6°E on 29 Mar '95 and two at 33.7°S 18.1°E on 7 Apr.

Blue-footed Booby ***Sula nebouxii***. DKB saw 50 in Guayaquil Roads on 18 Nov, a few at 3.5°S 80.7°W on 23 Nov, two at 6.2°S 80.5°W next day, eight at 23.7°S 70.7°W on 30 Nov, 100 in Paita Harbour on 15 Dec, and 652 at 5.0°S 81.3°W, 13 at 3.6°S 80.8°W and 17 at 3.3°S 80.6°W next day.

Peruvian Booby ***Sula variegata***. DKB saw a few at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov, 600 at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27th, a few at Antofagasta on 27 Nov, 235 at 28.0°S 71.7°W on 1 Dec, two at 11.9°S 77.8°W and 896 at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7 Dec, thousands in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec, 206 at 9.3°S 79.5°W, 13 at 8.1°S 80.1°W and many at 6.6°S 81.0°W on 14th, 20 in Paita Harbour on 15th, and 17 at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.

Masked Booby ***Sula dactylatra***. In the western Indian Ocean, SMDA saw two at 7°N 54.0°E on 20 Aug '55 and two immatures at 1.3°N 54.2°E on 28th, AS four 30nm south of the Kuria Muria Is, south Oman, on 31 Aug '96; and MAC & MGH five at *ca* 14.5°N 42.0°E on 9 Feb '97, and four at 12.9°N 52.1°W next day. Off western South America, MAC saw two at 22°S 75°W on 27 Oct '93, and DKB one at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov '96 and 18.3°S 76.0°W on 6 Dec. MAC saw two at 12°S 68°W in the Caribbean on 3 June, and CP 25 at 7.9°S 14.4°W in the tropical Atlantic on 6 Apr '95.

Brown Booby ***Sula leucogaster***. SMDA saw birds following shoals of fish among small islands at 13.0°N 43.2°E off southern Eritrea on 1 Sep '55, and AS one at 12.5°N 43.7°E off Aden on 28 Aug '96. MAC & MGH saw 21 at *ca* 14.5°N 42.0°E in the Indian Ocean on 6 Feb '97 and two at 4.3°N 111.8°E on 2 March. Off western South America, DKB saw one at 6.8°N 79.8°W on 16 Nov '96, one at 1.9°N 80.4°W next day, and fifty at 1.5°S 80.8°W on 25 Dec. In the Caribbean, MAC saw one at 19.5°N 66.2°W on 25 May '96, and JP 40 on Les Gros islets at 17.9°N 62.8°W on 5 Feb '97, four in English Harbour, Antigua on 7-8 Feb, one at 17°N 62°W on 8th, 24 at St Barthelemy on 8-10th, and four at Crocus Bay, Anguilla on 12-16 Feb. CP saw one at 7.9°S 14.4°W on 16 Apr '95.

Red-footed Booby ***Sula sula***. Off western South America, DKB saw two at 6.8°N 79.8°W on 16 Nov, three at 1.9°N 80.4°W and 0.3°S 80.8°W next day, one at 0.2°S 81.0°W and two 1.3°N 80.8°W on 23 Dec, and one at 6.6°N 79.5°W next day. In the Caribbean, MAC saw 30 (one white, the rest white-tailed brown morphs) at 12°N 68°W on 3 June, one at 11.5°N 67.7°W next day, and one white and three white-tailed brown morphs at 14.8°N 66.7°W on 17 June. JP saw two possible birds at 17.9°N 62.7°W off St. Barthelémy on 10 Feb '97.

CORMORANTS and SHAGS *Phalacrocoracidae*

Olivaceous Cormorant ***Phalacrocorax brasilianus***. DKB saw one in Callao Harbour on 25 Nov, many at Antofagasta on 29-30 Nov, one at 23.7°S 70.7°W on 30th, several at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, a few in Huacho Roads on 7-13th, over 100 at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec., and over 230 at 3.2°S 80.3°W

next day.
Imperial Shag ***Leucocarbo atriceps***. MAC saw one at 53°S 73°W in the Magellan Strait on 17 Oct. '93, and CP 115 perched on rocks at 54.9°S 67.3°W off Tierra del Fuego on 2 Feb '65 and six at 54.1°S 70.9°W on 6 Feb. KM saw birds in the Beagle Channel on 17 Nov, off New Island on 19 Feb, and Stanley on 21st, in the Bransfield Strait on 24 Feb, and Gerlache Strait next day, in Hope Bay and around Rosamel I. and breeding on Paulet I. on passing through the Antarctic Strait on 9 Dec; and here and around the South Shetlands during the rest of the month, with birds breeding on Half Moon I. off Livingstone I. on 10 Dec. and chicks on Paulet I. next day.
Guanay ***Leucocarbo bougainvillii***. Off western South America, DKB saw the first at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov, over 6000 at 14.0°S 76.4°W and a few at 15.3°S 75.7°W on 27 Nov, 4,270 at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7 Dec, thousands in Huacho Roads on 7-13th, and 27 at 9.3°S 79.5°W and two at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14th.
European Shag ***Stictocarbo aristotelis***. LO & MW saw five at 38.1°N 9.9°E off Tunisia on 14 Oct.
Red-legged Shag ***Stictocarbo gaimardi***. DKB saw one in Huacho Roads during 7-13 Dec.
Rock Shag ***Stictocarbo magellanicus***. KM regularly saw birds in the Beagle Channal in Nov-Dec. '95 and off New Island, in the Falklands, on 17 Nov.

FRIGATEBIRDS *Fregatidae*
Ascension Frigatebird ***Fregata aquila***. CP saw eight at 7.9°S 14.4°W on 16 Apr '95.
Magnificent Frigatebird ***Fregata magnificens***. Off the west coast of South America, DKB saw the first two at 6.8°N 79.8°W on 16 Nov, thousands in Guayaquil Roads, where there appeared to be a colony on a wooded island near the delta mouth, on 18th, a few at 3.5°S 80.7°W, hundreds in Paita Harbour on 15 Dec, 12 at 5.0°S 8l.3°W, 28 at 3.6°S 80.8°W and 43 at 3.3°S 80.6°W on 16th, thousands at 3.2°S 80.3°W on 17th, individuals at 0.2°S 8l.0°W and l.5°N 80.8°W on 23rd, and the last hundred at 1.5°S 80.8°W on 25 Dec. In the Caribbean, MAC saw birds at 13.1°N 61.3°W on 11 June, and 16.1°N 88.6°W on 22 June, and JP eight at 18.0°N 63.1°W between St. Maartens and St. Barthelemy on 4 Feb '97, three at 17.9°N 62.8°W between there and Antigua on 5 Dec, and in English Harbour, Antigua, on 7 Feb, two at 17°N 62°W next day, three at 17.9°N 62,7°W off St. Barthelémy on 9th, 13 at 18.0°N 63.1°W off St Maartens 13 on 12th, and three in Crocus Bay, Anguilla on 12-16 Feb.
Great Frigatebird ***Fregata minor***. In the western Indian Ocean, SMDA saw an all-dark frigate at l.3°N 54.2°E on 28 Aug '55, and AS an unidentified frigate 200nm north of Mahé on 15 Dec '96.

PHALAROPES *Phalaropopidae*
Red-necked Phalarope ***Phalaropus lobatus***. TJ saw one at 5.3°S 130.1°E in the Banda Sea on 23 March.
Phalarope ***Phalaropus*** sp. DKB saw over 2,000 (possibly mostly Red Phalaropes *P. fulicarius*?) at 3.5°S 80.7°W, off western South America, on 23 Nov, four at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 11 at 7.5°S 80.5°W next day, three at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27th, 11 at 23.7°S 70.7°W on 30 Nov, six at 28.0°S 71.7°W on 1

Dec, three at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7th, hundreds off Huacho on 7-13th, and one at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.

SHEATHBILLS *Chionidae*

Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. CP saw one with skuas around a Killer Whale at 63.6°S 56.5°W in the South Shetlands on 7 Jan '95, and KM three at 54.6°S 64.5°W on 18 Nov, one at 54.6°S 55.8°W on 2 Dec, and near Elephant I. on 8th, birds along the Antarctic Strait next day and Boyd Strait the day after, in the South Shetlands, across the Bransfield Strait and through the Antarctic Strait on 15-17th, and up and down the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 25-26 Dec.

SKUAS *Stercorariinae*

Large skuas *Catharacta* sp. Off Scotland, GHW & AHT saw **Great Skuas *C. (s.) skua*** at 49.2°N 8.6°W on 17 Apr, 34.7°N 75.0°W on 14 May and in lower Loch Long on 9 June, and GHW & AHT one at 57.7°N 9.7°W on 13 June, three at 58.6°N 11.1 °W on 14 th, and three at 58°N 6°W on 19-20 June. Between Plymouth and Santander, SH & DH saw 12 at *ca* 44°N 4°W in the Bay of Biscay and 109 between 48-50°N 5°W off Brittany on 27-29 Oct. compared with only seven off Brittany during a similar trip between 11-13 Oct '92. One had a pronounced inverted white 'V' on the upper-wing, possible due to exposure of the pale bases of the primaries when the coverts were moulted, and another chased a Blackbird.

In the south, CP reported two **Southern Skuas *C. (skua) antarctica*** with a Killer Whale at 63.6°S 56.5°W off the South Shetlands on 7 Jan '95, one at 64.0°S 56.5°W on 17 Jan, three at 63.6°S 56.3°W next day, five at 63.6°S 56.5°W on 27 Jan, one at 62.9°S 57.6°W on 9 Feb, 64.2°S 55.4°W next day, and one at 37.0°S 12.6°W off Tristan on 24 Feb. KM reports it often occurred in large numbers around penguin colonies, with ten off New Island in the Falklands on 19 Nov, one at 54.2°S 57.7°W crossing the Burdwood Bank on 22 Nov, one off King George I. next day, regularly in the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits over 24-27th, approaching Ushuaia on 30 Nov, between Staten I. and South Georgia between 1-5 Dec, at 60.8°S 53.5°W near Elephant I. on 8th, through the Antarctic Strait past Rosamel I. and Paulet I. to 63.6°S 56.6°W in the Weddell Sea and back next day, in the Bransfield and Boyd Straits on 10th, around the South Shetlands on 15 Dec, many at Maxwell Bay and Half Moon I. next day, and some through the Antarctic, Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 17-18th and again on 23-26 Dec. Off western South America, DKB saw 50 large skuas at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov '96, one at 28.0°S 71.7°W on 1 Dec, 33 at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7th., three at 9.3°S 79.5°W 14th, and four at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.

Off Tierra del Fuego, CP also reported three **Chilean Skuas *Catharacta chilensis*** at 54.9°S 67.3°W on 2 Feb '95 and seven at 54.1°S 70.9°W on 6 Feb, KM birds in the Beagle Channel and around the docks at Ushuaia in Nov-Dec, and DKB one at 29.4°S 71.7°W near Coquimbo (Chile), on 1 Dec '96. Only KM reported **McCormick's (or the "South Polar") Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*,** mainly at sea, including a dark bird at 54.2°S 64.3°W off Tierra del Fuego on 18 Nov '95, a light one near Deception I. on 24 Nov, two medium ones in the Gerlache Strait next day, intermediate and light birds in the Antarctic Strait on 9 Dec, and mainly intermediates in the Bransfield and

Boyd Straits next day and the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 18 and 24-26 Dec. He remarks that whereas most birdwatchers are soon able to identify such species as the prions, they merely became more confused over the skuas, and that he saw intermediates between all the forms listed above.

As we have tried to explain elsewhere (Bourne & Curtis 1994), these problems may arise because, in addition to hybridising with the other forms, *maccormicki* tends to fade greatly, starting uniformly dark, becoming very pale, and then mottled,with the first new feathers forming a darker cap and the last old feathers a pale ring round the bill as it renews the dark plumage, the various age-groups moulting at different times, the immatures at sea in the south during the breeding season, and older birds to the north afterwards. Thus, where Newell *et al.* (1997) have now found numbers of McCormick's Skuas migrating south in autumn past Cape Verde, West Africa (so that it seems increasingly likely that they are being overlooked off western Europe), they occurred in three distinct plumages: one group dark with a collar of golden hackles, which seem likely to be the moulted breeding adults; the second dark with a paler head and neck which seem likely to be moulted older immatures; and the third much paler, which seem likely to be younger immatures in worn plumage, which will moult later in the southern hemisphere.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. CP saw one at 1.4°S 16.0°W in the tropical Atlantic on 18 Apr '95, and there are scattered records further north. In the west, MAC saw birds at 36.9°N 43.8°W on 22 Apr '96, 35.8°N 61.5°W on 24 Apr. and 33.3°N 77.2°W on 14 May, GHW & AHT at 38.9°N 55.7°W and 38.8°N 62.8°W on 25 Apr, and 32.8°N 75.5°W on 2 May, and MAC & MGH two at 10.5°N 75.2°W on 21 Feb '97. SH & DH saw 14 at 44-50°N 4-5°W between Plymouth and Santander on 27-29 Oct '96, and DKB many at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 7.5°S 80.5°W off western South America on 24 Nov, seven at 9.3°S 79.5°W and eight at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14 Dec, and one at 3.3°S 80.6°W on 16 Dec.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. CP saw two at 7.9°S 14.4°W in the South Atlantic on 16 Apr '95, SH & DH birds at *ca* 48.5°N 5°W off Brittany on both 11 and 13 Oct '62, and again on 27 Oct '96, and DKB two off Peru at 6.2°S 80.5°W and a few at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov '96, two at 9.3°S 79.5°W and several at 6.6°S 81.0°W on 14 Dec, and one at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec. TJ saw one in Newcastle Roads, east Australia, on 6 Apr.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicauda*. CP saw one at 15.0°N 17.9°W on 21 Apr '95, SH & DH one at *ca* 48°N 4.5°W off Brittany on 29 Oct '96, and DKB two at 6.2°S 80.5°W and 7.5°S 80.5°W off Peru on 24 Nov, and three at 9.3°S 79.5°W and four at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14 Dec.

GULLS *Larinae*

Grey Gull *Larus modestus*. DKB saw one at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, ten in Antofagasta Harbour on 29-30 Nov, and 50 in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec.

Belcher's Gull *Larus belcheri*. DKB saw 200 in Callao Harbour on 25 Nov, two at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, and 50 in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. CP saw ten immatures at 48.7°N 5.7°W on 3 May '95, and MAC & MGH three at 36.0°N 5.2°W on 20 Jan '97, and one at 37.2°N 11.5°W on 23 Jan. 50 Greater Blackbacks *L. marinus* reported by LO & MW in Cadiz Harbour on 17 Oct '96 seem likely to have

been this species.

Heuglin's Gull and **Yellow-legged Gull** ***Larus heuglini*** and ***L. cachinnans***. In the course of otherwise interesting articles on the identification of Yellow-legged Gulls, Garner (1997a, b) has misidentified a sub-adult of the form *barabensis* from Dubai reported in *Sea Swallow* 45: 87 last year as an adult, which renders his comments on this form questionable. SH saw 150 gulls of this group in the Chapora estuary, Goa, on 21 Nov.

Iceland Gull ***Larus glaucoides***. SH & DH saw an adult at *ca* 49°N 5°W off Brittany on 29 Oct, after a gale.

Kelp Gull ***Larus dominicanus***. Off the South Shetlands, CP saw birds at 63.7°S 56.2°W on 9 Jan '95 and 63.6°S 56.3°W on 22 Jan, and an immature at 65.4°S 55.1°W on 11 Feb KM saw birds leaving Ushuaia on 17 Nov, off Stanley on 21st, and in the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 24-27 Nov, up to 30 off Staten I. on 1 Dec, off South Georgia on 4-5th, Elephant I. on 8th, along the Antarctic Strait, Bransfield and Boyd Straits during the rest of the month, and off Cape Horn on 19 Dec, with an immature at 58.5°S 48°W in the central Scotia Sea on 7 Dec. DKB saw seven at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov '96, a few at Antofagasta on 29-30th, and 50 at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, and Huacho Roads on 13-17 Dec.

Dolphin Gull ***Larus scoresbii***. Seen regularly in the approaches to Ushuaia by KM in Nov-Dec '95, and off New I. in the Falklands on 19 Nov.

White-eyed Gull ***Larus leucophthalmus***. Seen by SMDA following shoals of fish at 13.0°N 43.2°E and later in the wake off Eritrea on 1 Sep '55, in Port Sudan on 3 Sep, with 25 following the ship into the Gulf of Suez on 5 Sep.

Sooty Gull ***Larus hemprichii***. First seen by SMDA at 16.6°N 41.0°E on 15 Aug '55, with up to ten in the wake in the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb next day, up to 30 in the wake at 13.0°N 43.2°E off Eritrea on 1 Sep, and a few at Port Sudan on 3 Sep.

Laughing Gull ***Larus atricilla***. Off eastern North America, GHW & AHT saw one at 36.1°N 73.7°W on 30 Apr and 34.0°N 73.5°W on 5 Apr, and three at 38.4°N 73.3°W on 15 Apr. Off western South America, DKB saw one at 6.8°N 79.8°W on 16 Nov, 20 in Guayaquil Roads on 18 Nov, six at 6.2°S 80.5°W and thousands at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24th, 500 in Callao Harbour next day, 200 in Paita Harbour and 11 at 3.3°S 80.6°W on 16 Dec, 114 at 3.2°S 80.3°W on 17th, three at 0.2°S 81.0°W on 23rd, one at 6.7°N 79.5°W on 24th, and 100 in Panama Roads on 25 Dec.

Franklin's Gull ***Larus pipixcan***. DKB saw thousands at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov. and in Callao Harbour next day, few at Antofagasta on 29-30 Nov, 61 at 23.7°S 70.7°W on 30 Nov, over 200 at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, 180 at 11.7°S 77.9°W on 7 Dec, 15,000 in Huacho Roads on 7-13th, 1,250 at 9.3°S 79.5°W and over 2,000 at 8,1°S 80.1°W on 14th, a hundred in Paita Harbour on 15th, and eight at 5.0°S 81.3°W next day.

Great Gull ***Larus ichthyaetus***. SH saw three in summer plumage in the Chapora estuary, Goa, on 21 Nov.

Mediterranean Gull ***Larus melanocephalus***. SH & DH saw one off Santander on 12 Oct '92, and MAC a second winter bird in the wake at 50.3°N 2.4°W, 10nm SSE Portland, on 7 Mar '96.

Brown-headed Gull ***Larus brunnicephalus***. SH saw up to 360 in the Goa estuaries in late Nov.

Grey-headed Gull ***Larus cirrocephalus***. Off western South America, DKB saw

200 in Antofagasta Harbour on 29-30 Nov, 500 in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec. and 1,000 in Paita Harbour on 15 Dec. AS saw many in Durban Harbour, South Africa, on 21 Dec-10 Jan '67.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*. SH & DH saw four at *ca* 44°N 4.5°W in the Bay of Biscay on 12 Oct '92, and MAC & MGH 68 at 39.0°N 10.6°W, off Portugal, on 9 Jan '97.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. SH & DH saw an adult at *ca* 49°N 5°W in the Bay of Biscay on 27 Oct, and two immatures at *ca* 49°N 5°W two days later. DKB saw 20 at 3.5°S 80.7°W, off western South America, on 23 Nov, 18 at 6.2°S 80.5°W next day, 20 at 9.3°S 79.5°W and 56 at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14 Dec, and two at 5.0°S 81.3°W and 3.6°S 80.8°W on 16 Dec.

Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrus furcatus*. DKB saw the first at 3.5°S 80.7°W on 23 Nov, two at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, three at 23.7°S 70.7°W and five at 25.2°S 71.2°W on 30 Nov and the last at 18.3°S 76.0°W on 6 Dec. (see p53). Although they are said to pay little attention to ships, one perched on a crane for a short time.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Returning from the south, CP saw the first, an adult, at 20.3°N 18.1°W (18.7°C) off West Africa on 22 Apr '95.

TERNS *Sterninae*

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. CP saw 24 at 15.0°N 17.9°W off West Africa on 21 Apr '95, four at 24.7°N 16.5°W on the 23rd, and 40 feeding with a flock of Cory's Shearwaters at 28.6°N 15.1°W on the 29th. DKB saw 200 at 3.5°S 80.7°W off Ecuador on 23 Nov '96.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*. SO & FKJ saw eight at Durres (Albania), on 8 Oct. and SH two hawking over paddy fields at Goa on 28 Nov.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. SH saw up to 110 in the Goa estuaries in late Nov, which unlike the other terns were not in moult. DKB saw five at 3.2°S 80.3°W on 17 Dec.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. CP saw 19 at 54.9°S 67.3°W off Tierra del Fuego on 2 Feb '95 and 21 at 54.1°S 70.9°W on 6 Feb, and KM birds off New Island in the Falklands on 19 Nov, and sometimes many approaching Ushuaia in Nov and Dec. DKB saw some in Callao Harbour on 25 Nov '96, Antofagasta Harbour on 29-30 Nov, and Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. KM saw terns, most of which were probably this species, over the Burdwood Bank and along the Antarctic Convergence from Staten Island to South Georgia during 1-4 Dec '95, including a definite identification at 54.5°S 55.2°W on 2 Dec, one off the Bay of Isles, South Georgia, on 5th. *ca* 10 in the caldera at Deception I. on 18th., and one at 65.9°S 64.0°W close to Pleanau I. in the Lemaire Channel on 25 Dec. DKB saw 200 at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec '96, one at 8.1°S 80.1°W on 14th, two in Paita Harbour next day, and one at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.

Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*. CP saw up to 25 around the South Shetlands in Jan-Feb '65 and five at 37.0°S 12.6°W off Tristan on 24 March. KM saw birds in the Bransfield and Gerlache Straits on 24-27 Nov, off South Georgia on 4-5 Dec, and Elephant I. on 8th, in the Antarctic Strait on 9th

and the Bransfield and Boyd Straits next day, off the South Shetlands on 15-16th, when some were breeding on Half Moon I. off Livingstone I., around Paulet I. in the Weddell Sea on 17th, in the Bransfield Strait next day, and at Deception I. up the Gerlache Strait over 23-25 Dec.

Roseate Tern ***Sterna dougallii***. CP saw one at 15.0°N 17.9°W off West Africa on 21 Apr '95.

Bridled Tern ***Sterna anaethetus***. SMDA saw many, with a large proportion of immatures and moulting adults, following shoals of fish among small islands at 13.0°N 43.2°E off Eritrea on 1 Sep '55, and GHW & AHT 50 of this or the next species at 33.1°N 75.5°W, 10m off Cape Fear, N Carolina, on 2 May '96, and they described two seen at 33.4°N 73.5°W, 60m off Cape Fear, next day.

Sooty Tern ***Sterna fuscata***. In the South Atlantic CP saw two at 15.9°S 5.4°W on 12 Apr '95 and 28 at 7.9°S 14.4°W on 16 Apr. In the Caribbean, MAC & MGH saw 292 at 14.4°N 72.0°W on 15 Feb. '97 and 500 at 9.7°N 75.6°W on 21 Feb. A mysterious small tern which was uniformly chestnut brown with a white vent and tail seen by MAC & MGH at 2.9°N 108.2°E in the South China Sea on 1 Mar '97 may have been a moulting immature of this species?

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. Adult & juvenile, at Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, Australia, 21 August 1991.
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

Little/ Saunders Tern ***Sterna albifrons/ saundersi***. SH saw up to ten in the Goa estuaries in late Nov.

Peruvian Tern ***Sterna lorata***. DKB saw one at 23.7°S 70.7°W near Antofagasta on 30 Nov.

Swift Tern ***Sterna bergii***. SMDA saw 20 off Aden on 16 and 31 Aug '55 and some following fish shoals at 13.0°N 43.2°E off Eritrea on 1 Sep. SH saw up to 213, about 20% adults in primary moult and 80% immatures in both primary and secondary moult, in the Goa estuaries in late Nov '96. MAC & MGH saw

one at 3.3°N 108.4°E in the South China Sea on 1 March '97.
Royal Tern ***Sterna maxima***. Off western South America, DKB saw a few in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec '96, thirty in Paita Harbour on 15th, two at 5.0°S 81.3°W and three at 3.6°S 80.8°W on 16th, 22 at 3.2°S 80.3°W next day, and four at 1.5°S 80.8°W on 25 Dec. In the Caribbean, JP saw one in English Harbour, Antigua, on 8 Feb '97 and four at St. Maartens on 11 Feb, and MAC one at 18.2°N 65.2°W on 27 May.
Elegant Tern ***Sterna elegans***. DKB saw 20 in Guayaquil Roads on 18 Nov, a few in Callao Harbour on 25 Nov, 30 at Valparaiso on 2-3 Dec, and one at 5.0°S 81.3°W on 16 Dec.
Lesser Crested Tern ***Sterna bengalensis***. SMDA saw several at Port Sudan on 3 Sep '55, and SH up to 12, 80% adult, all in primary moult, in the Goa estuaries in late Nov '96.
Sandwich Tern ***Sterna sandvicensis***. TJ saw three at Cadiz on 17 Oct, and DKB some in Callao Harbour on 25 Nov, 100 in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec, and 192 at 3.2°S 80.3°W on 17 Dec.
Inca Tern ***Larosterna inca***. DKB saw 20 at 7.5°S 80.5°W on 24 Nov, some in Callao Harbour next day, 100 at 14.0°S 76.4°W on 27 Nov, 700 in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec, and 12 at 9.3°S 79.5°W on 14 Dec.
Brown Noddy ***Anous stolidus***. CP saw one at 15.9°S 5.4°W on 12 Apr '95 and 30 at 7.9°S 14.4°W on 16 Apr. MAC saw birds at 13.6°N 61.2°W on 10 June '96 and 11.2°N 62.5°W on 16 Jun.
Black Noddy ***Anous minutus***. CP saw one at 7.9°S 14.4°W on 16 Apr '95. (see note on pp 79-80)
White Tern ***Gygis alba***. SMDA saw many off Mahé, in the Seychelles, on 27 Aug '55 in the days before Barn Owls were introduced there. (On a recent visit there he reports they are much reduced). CP saw two at 15.9°S 5.4°W on 12 Apr '95.

SKIMMERS *Rynchopinae*

Black Skimmer ***Rynchops nigra***. DKB saw six in Huacho Roads on 7-13 Dec.

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LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Michael Casement

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials:

Mrs Jean Abbott, MV *Hornbreeze*, 4-25 May '97, Guadaloupe - Costa Rica (1).

LSA M.A.J. Cutts, RN. HMS *Fearless*, 7-8 Mar '96 English Channel (1+ 1 BEH); 17 Apr-22 June '96, Devonport-Norfolk VA- Wilmington NC-Puerto Rico-Martinique-Belize(1+1BEH); 11 Nov '96 North Sea (2).

LSA M.A.J Cutts & Lt Cdr M.G. Hudson RN, HMS *Fearless*, 19 Jan-2 Mar '97, Portsmouth - Piraeus-Port Said-Djibouti-Goa-Borneo (4).

Stephen Hales & Derek Hallett, MV *Val de Loire*, 27-29 Oct '96, Plymouth to Santander and return (1).

Captain P.W. Jackson MN, MV *Seki Cedar*, 8 Mar-25 May '97. N. Sea-West Med, and return (2).

LA (Metoc) Chris Patrick RN, HMS *Endurance*, 22 Apr-3 May '95, E. North Atlantic (1).

Claire Pollock (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Aberdeen), MV *Téa* 15-28 Aug '95, Campbelltown (Mull of Kintyre) to Cork (S. Ireland) (2); RRS *Challenger*, 13-31 May '97, Gt. Yarmouth to west of Ireland - N. Sea, Channel, Celtic Sea, Atlantic (2).

Henry Turner & Sperry Rademaker MV *Alla Tarasova*, 29 Nov '96, Steeple Jason Is. to Falklands (1).

L/H (Comms) A.H. Todd RFA, and CPO (Comms) G.H. Walton RFA, RFA *Fort Grange*,16 April-7 June '96 (N. Atlantic - deployment to USA and return) (2); 7-20 June '96 (Atlantic - Scottish waters) (1).

Henry Turner & Sperry Rademaker MV *Alla Tarasova*, 29 Nov '96, Steeple Jason I. to Falklands (1).

LWEM A. Stockwell RN, HMS *Edinburgh*, 27 Aug-21 Dec '96, Suez-Persian Gulf - Seychelles - Durban (2 + 8 photos).

CPO (Comms) G.H. Walton RFA, RFA *Fort Victoria*, 30 Mar-6 Apr '97, English Channel - SW Approaches (3).

Captain P.A. Woods MN, MV *Bali Star*, 9 Dec '96, on passage Saudi Arabia to Galveston, Gulf of Mexico (1).

Records also included in this analysis are from a number of personal letters from other correspondents, notably Mrs Judith Pentreath (Yacht *Salvation Jane*), Captain J.B. Nicholls MN (Fishing Research Vessel (FRV) *Scotia*), in amplification of his records submitted with Met. Logs, and Mr David K. Ballance (MS *Lublin* II) - see also the latter's article page 51.

Several new names appear in this list, and once again an encouraging variety of interesting records has been received from the Met. Office, Bracknell, extracted from Met. Logs of weather reporting ships - these are indicated by the notation (Met). A number of these observers are already members of RNBWS. I gratefully acknowledge my thanks to Captain E.J.O'Sullivan MN who forwards the extracts from this valuable source.

For the past 28 years there have been regular records from the Ocean Weatherships, station LIMA, but the manning of this station has now been

discontinued, as was announced last year - *Sea Swallow* 45: 70. Another sadness is that Captain P.W.G. Chilman, has regretfully had to give up his regular comments on seabird records received from the Met. Office, due to the pressure of other commitments.

Highlights of this analysis are the records of **Eastern Red-footed (Amur) Falcon *Falco amurensis*** (see section G), and **Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*** (Section A), and I am grateful to a number of observers sending photographs to clinch difficult identifications.

SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), BAY OF BISCAY and IBERLANT

1995

On 1 May, CP recorded a Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* flying N at 0830 at 38.5°N 11.5°W, 90nm west of Lisbon, and a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* at 1150 flying NW, at 7m height. A Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* circled am. 2nd at 44.2°N 9.6°W, 70nm NW C. Ortegal. At 1010 on 3 May, when 60nm NW Ushant (48.3°N 06.1°W), he saw a group of 20 medium-sized waders, possibly Redshank *Tringa totanus*, flying low northwards. At 1645 he recorded a Common Swift *Apus apus* flying SE at 30m.

During the period 15-28 Aug, CP (JNCC), was operating off the west coast of Ireland, and recorded: 14 Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* on 15th, at 54.3°N 10.0°W, 15nm NW Donegal Bay, flying westerly. On 16th, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (4 calling), Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (6 heading S.) Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (3 heading N.) were noted on 16th in the area 54.1°N 10.2°W, close off the coast. Swallows (2 + 4 + 1 + 1) were noted off Galway Bay at 53.2°N 09.5°W on 18th, also Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (2 heading north) and Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (one heading SE). Six Dunlin (heading S.) a Swallow (heading N.) and an Oystercatcher (heading SW) were sighted off Shannon (52.3° 10.1°W) on 19th. Dunlin (2), were sighted off Dingle Bay (52.1°N 24.2°W) on 20th, and a Curlew (heading S.), Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* (8), and a Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* on 21st, close off the coast at 51.7°N 10.0°W. Three Swallows were seen heading SW on 22 Aug close offshore, at 51.6°N 09.8°W.

1996

JBN recorded a female Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, on 23 March, 25nm ENE Cape Wrath, Scotland. It rested overnight in his "Bird Hospital Box", and released next day.

On 16 March, MV *Seki Pine* (Captain P.W. Jackson MN, RNBWS member) reported (Met) , a group of five probable Willow Warblers aboard, at 36.0°N 06.5°W, approaching Gib Straits.

On 5 May, three Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* arrived aboard MV *Seki Pine* (Met) in position 49.1°N 4.6°W.

On 6 May, a probable Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* two doves and three swallows were reported aboard MV *Chiquita Scandinavia* (Met) at 42.7°N 19.2°W, 450nm NE Azores.

On 15 May two Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* were photographed aboard MV*Amethyst*, in the Bay of Biscay at 45.9°N 07.9°W, 130nm north of Corunna. They remained until passing C. Finisterre on 16th. Also on board

On 5 May, three Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* arrived aboard MV *Seki Pine* (Met) in position 49.1°N 4.6°W.

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An unidentified wader was reported aboard MV *Seki Cedar* (Met) on 18 July, in posn. 40.2°N 9.8W, 39nm west of C. Mondego, Portugal. It was identified from sketch as a probable Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*. It remained for about an hour.

On 23 July, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was recorded aboard *RRS Challenger* (Met), at 56.5°N 09.0°W, 50nm WSW Berneray, Outer Hebrides. It was in a very bedraggled state, was probably juvenile, and departed SSE after 30 mins..

On 18 Aug, MV *Arctic Ranger* (Met), on passage to north arctic fishing grounds, recorded a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* at 65.1°N 05.1°E. This entered the bridge, and was caught, identified and released. Two Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* were also aboard. On 22 Sep, whilst on passage Bear Island to Iceland, a Spotted Flycatcher was caught aboard, photographed and released in posn. 68.7°N 16.6°W, 150nm north of Iceland; it appeared in good condition and flew off S'ly direction.

At 0940 on 4 Sept, SS *Leonia* (Met) recorded a probable Grey Heron aboard at 08.1°N 16.0°W, 160nm west of Sierra Leone. It remained until 1400, last seen at 08.6°N 16.5°W

Five large herons arrived aboard MV *British Ranger* (Met) on 7 Oct, at 07.1°N 27.1°W, 500nm SSW C. Verde Is. From sketches and descriptions given they were probably Grey Herons.

During the period 4-14 September, JBN was conducting a fishing research survey at the Rockall Plateau, and logged the following landbird highlights: Meadow Pipit aboard on 8th and 9th (possibly the same bird), Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (juv) aboard on 9th - the weather was fine and clear, winds NE/1-2. Skies were overcast with drizzle on 10th, when approx 15 Meadow Pipits and a Pied Wagtail were aboard. On 11th a wader identified as a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* flew round vessel for couple of hours. (COMMENT. No description was given for this rare vagrant from N. America, but date is possible. MBC) - wind was NW/4, overcast. Approx 15 Meadow Pipits landed aboard am on 12th, also a Turnstone, which was photographed. The weather on 13th was fine and clear, with light airs, when a Merlin *Falco columbarius*, *c.*30 Meadow Pipits were aboard am., and a Pied Wagtail was seen heading towards Rockall Rock. A Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* (adult M), arrived aboard with the pipits, and a Redshank. JBN photographed a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* arrived aboard during a foggy night, 70 nm NW Hebrides. It rested overnight and was released.

Turnstone Arenaria interpres Rockall Plateau, 12 September 1996.
Photo: Captain JB Nicholls MN

A number of Swallows were reported around MV *Kazimah* (Met), 21-24 October, off W. Africa. There had been heavy rain just prior to their first appearance, with winds SSW/4. Several died on board. Posn. 05.N° 13.1°W, 130nm SW Liberia.

On 28 Oct, SH & DH saw 13 Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, mostly males, off Santander, N. Spain.

On 4 Nov, DKB recorded a Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*, which obligingly perched on a crane-cable for close inspection, when at 36.8°N 25°W (5nm off Santa Maria in the Azores). Full details and description of this were forwarded to the appropriate Iberian authorities, as a possible first record for this area.

Two probable Kestrels were reported aboard MV *Isomeria* on 8 Nov, at 37.5°N 12.7°W, 165nm SW Lisbon. A "pigeon" was aboard at this time, and it was thought to have been attacked and devoured by the Kestrels.

A probable Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was reported aboard MV *Argentina Star* (Met), in December (date not given), at 07.9° 25.6°W, 420nm south of C. Verde Is.

On 18 Dec, a group of eight white egrets were photographed aboard MV *Duhallow* (Met), which landed at 13.6°N 22.5°W, 120nm south of C. Verde Is. These were probably Cattle Egrets.

1997

On 8 Jan, DKB recorded two Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* at 47.7°N 07.5°W, 140nm SW Ushant.

PWJ recorded a Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* attempting to land aboard on 23 Mar, at 36.4°N 03.5°W, 40nm WSW Cadiz. At 1530 on 4 Apr, he saw a Willow Warbler aboard at 38.0°N 09.6°W, 32nm off C. Espichel and, at 1700, Woodchat Shrike (1), Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (1), and Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (1).

On 6 Apr, GHW recorded a Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (M) aboard at 1930, 40nm south of Scillies (49.2°N 06.2°W), and a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* on 8th at 49.9°N 04.4°W, 20nm SSW Eddystone. A Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix was aboard (white belly noted) at 49.2N 08.2W, 80nm SW Scillies, at 1500 on 18th. Winds during this period were easterly.

During the period 13-31 May, CP (JNCC) was again operating west of Ireland and recorded a Whimbrel, 60nm west at 52.9°N 11.2°W on 13th. Three Swallows were flying around the ship, entering the accommodation on evening of 14th, at 52.5°N 12.8°W, 95nm WNW Dingle Bank. One was quite weak and was kept overnight, but was released OK next morning. Two Swallows were noted, 90nm west of Shannon am. on 15th, also Turtle Doves (1 + 2 heading N.) 1455-1550. A House Martin was sighted at 1130 on 18th, at 54.5°N 10.8°W, 30nm west of coast, and Swallow at 1410. (The wind was NE'ly). A Turnstone circled the ship several times before departing E at 1220 on 20th, and a Swallow and House Martin (circling) were sighted, in posn. 33.6°N 11.9°W. A Dunlin was flying round ship at 1530/21st, and three single Swallows on 24th (posn. 53.5°N 11.0°W). A Swallow, and a Collared Dove were seen at 53.1°N 10.3°W (20nm west of Galway) on 26th. Two sightings of Swallow and a House Martin were recorded on 27th at 53.8°N 11.6°W. Ten racing pigeons settled aboard at 1430 on 31st at 50.2°N 08.4°W (75nm west of Scillies), and remained until arrival at Portland.

On 25 May, PWJ recorded a Hobby *Falco subbuteo* about the ship for two hours, at 41.6°N 09.6°W, 40nm SW Vigo (Portugal). Also aboard was a Swallow and a Housemartin.

SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA and BALTIC

1996

In February (date not given), f.r.v. *Scotia*. (Captain J.B. Nichols MN, RNBWS member) reported (Met). Dunlin *Calidris alpina* aboard, 50nm east of Aberdeen (56°N 00°W), which remained most of day. On 13 Feb an Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*, was recorded 10nm west of coast of Norway, at 60.0°N 03.0°E. It was identified by knowledgeable "birder" aboard, (Michael Williams), by white rump, and body less streaked than C. *flammeus*.

During a North Sea Survey, JBN attempted to photograph a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, briefly aboard on 16 March at 56.6°N 07.0°E, 35nm west of Denmark. Also aboard during that day were: Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (2) Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (several), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (1), Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* (1) and Goldcrest *R. regulus* (1). The weather was S'ly 2/3 with mist and visibility 2nm.

JBN also gives a graphic description of his attempts to photograph an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, which landed aboard in the same area, on the evening of 20 March: "A large bird was first reported circling astern, with the usual gulls, kittiwakes and fulmars, which await the pickings from our trawling activity. No one managed a good view of the large bird, and it disappeared as night fell. Out of curiosity, I switched on the bridge searchlight and was delighted to find a large Osprey perched on the weather-vane atop the focsle jackstaff! It was totally oblivious to the strong beam of light,and the ship's crew and science staff were able to admire the Osprey from the bridge - no more than 50 ft away. The spectacle was comically further enhanced because our weather vane is shaped as a fish, so the bird appeared to be clutching a recent catch! After a half-hour of wonderful spectating, folks resumed their

duties, whilst I took several photographs, using a 300mm lens, and the searchlight as my light source. I then attempted some close-ups, but my appearance on the bow frightened the bird. So I ordered the searchlight to be extinguished, whilst I crouched behind the windlass, waited and hoped. Some ten minutes later I heard a "swoosh" of wing-beats, and the Osprey again settled on the fishy weather-vane. Using a walkie/talkie, I asked the bridge to switch on the searchlight, and I admired the bird from no more than 15 feet away, before attempting more photographs. It was a fantastic birding experience, but unfortunately the photographs were unsuccessful, the black plumage merged with the night sky, and the rest of the bird was hardly visible, except for flash-light reflected in the bird's eye."

MV ***Shetland Service*** reported (Met) the following species seen at 57.5°N 00.5°E (Kittiwake Oilfield):
24 March. 0700 Six Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* circled vessel and Kittiwake platform several times before flying off south. 0800-0900 One Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* flying round v/l landing occasionally, at one point crashed into after bridge window. 1300-1800 One Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* landed on maindeck and rested for most of the afternoon before departing SW.
25 April. One Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* resting on after deck.
29 April. One Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* aboard briefly.

On 19 May, MV *Elk* reported (Met) the following species, but no descriptions were given, at 55.6°N 02.2°E, 100nm NE Whitby: Housemartin (2), Swift (2), "Hen Harrier" (1), and Knot (winter plumage).

DKB recorded a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* aboard off Borkum (at 53.7°N 06.6°E), on 25 Oct. Starlings (10 + 10 + 5) were seen off N. Holland/Germany 0815 on 25th at 53.7°N 06.6°E - 05.8°E, and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* at 53.7°N 06.5°E, 10nm NW Borkum at 0930.

1997

PWJ recorded a Chiffchaff aboard, on 8 March, at 52.6°N 04.4°E, 10nm off Ijmuiden, Netherlands.

SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°)W

1996

Approaching Escoumins pilot station, St. Lawrence River, on 21 Feb, MV OOCL *Bravery* (Captain D.J. Pritchard MN) described (Met) a Bald-headed Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalis*, observed catching a large fish in its claws. It appeared to stun the fish by biting behind the head, as it flew away with it.

SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1996

At 1700 (local) 17 Feb, a large bird made several attempts to land aboard MV *Magnolia*. (Master: R.J. Beverley), (Met), on passage Bonny, (Nigeria) to Galveston, in posn. 14.6°N 72.2°W, 250nm SW Puerto Rico, 200nm north of Columbia. Description and sketch confirmed identity as an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

On 11 Nov, DKB recorded a Great Egret *Egretta alba*, at 18°N 68°W, 50nm SW Puerto Rico, and a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* - probable (F) -

perched on crane on 12th. It eventually departed south at 16°N 72°W, 100nm SW. Haiti. On 13th, a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* was observed close to vessel at 01°N 76.5°W, 65nm NW Cartagena (Columbia). A Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was recorded around vessel on 11 Nov, at 20°N 65°W, 100nm NE Puerto Rico, and another which came aboard in Mona Passage, and remained overnight 11/12th.

1997

JA reported two probable Barn Swallows and an unidentified martin about the ship on 5 May at 11.7°N 76.9°W, 120nm NW of Columbia.

SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN

1996

On 17 Jan, C.S. *Nexus* (Met) was engaged in cable laying operations 15nm off south coast of Sicily, 37.1°N 13.2°E, when a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* landed on bridge wing and flew straight though wheelhouse apparently in direction of nearby coast. At 1400 on 22 Feb, in posn. 34.1°N 23.7°E, a probable Kestrel *Falco tinunculus* juvenile, landed and perched on after bridge.

On 22 Mar (1000z), at 41.3°N 04.7°E, Co 090° @ 14 kts, on passage through Bonifacio Strait Barcelona to Civitavecchia, the following birds were sighted aboard MV *Seki Pine* (Captain P.W. Jackson MN - RNBWS member) (Met): Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (3 juv), Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (2M + 2F), Robin (1), Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* (2). A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* landed aboard at 1500 in position 41.3°N 06.3°E - flying about ship, but exhausted. Just capable of overtaking ship - flying speed estimated at 15 kts.

On 24 Mar, on passage towards Barcelona, having rounded N. Corsica overnight, variety of birds noted aboard including; Blackbird *Turdus merula* (1), Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (5), Robin (4), Black Redstart (1M + 1F), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (3), House Martin *Delichon urbica* (3), Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (1), Willow Warbler (2), Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1F) - detailed description given - small, grey cap, black eye-marks, with v. noticeable red-eye-ring, white throat.

On 26 Mar, a "fall" of birds aboard at 38.2°N 0.01°E (frontal windshift from N'ly F3 to SW F4). Species identified: Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (1), Robin (5), Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (but may have been Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*) (4), Redstart (10), and Black Redstart (4).

On 14 Apr, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (M) aboard at 0600z in 41.3°N 07.7°E. Also seen at 1100z on passing Bonifacio Strait: Robins (5), Redstart (1), Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (1), thrush *Turdus* sp. (1), Swallow (2), and Blackcap (1).

A probable Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (race not determined) was reported aboard MV *Seki Pine* (Met) on 14 May at 42.1°N 05.5°E, 60nm south of Marseilles.

On 24 May, JP reported a Nightjar (presumably *Caprimulgus europaeus*), flying very weakly over the sea at 40.3°N 24.1°E, to the south of the Akti Peninsula, Greece. 50+ Eleanora Falcons *Falco eleonorae* were counted flying off Skyros I. at 38.9°N 24.4°E on 7th, and two Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*

flying south on 18 June at 38.4°N 21.1°E. Two Ravens *Corvus corax* and two Buzzards *Buteo buteo* were sighted near Hidri, at 38.6°N 20.8°E on 21st.

On 6 Sept, JP recorded two Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* aboard at 45.9°N 17.2°E, near Korçula, Croatia. Sailing between Croatia and Corfu on 30 Sept, a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* landed aboard, and remained one hour, at 41.4°N 17.9°E.

On 13 Oct, MV Peninsular Bay (Captain J.W. Walsh MN- RNBWS member) reported (Met) a Redstart (M) a\t 37.2°N 11.4°E, 18nm NNE C. Bon.

1997

MAJC & MGH reported a flight of 12 Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, on 20 Jan, whilst passing 5nm south of Gibraltar. A Blackcap (F) was found sheltering on upperdeck am. 31st, at 34.5°N 27.3°E, 55nm SE Crete. Winds overnight had been NE/20kts.

On 7 Apr, PWJ saw 18 Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, flying NW over Barcelona harbour.

A single Swallow, the first of the year sighted aboard, was seen on 9 Apr, off Livorno (Italy), and a Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* was seen on 10th, also two Robins aboard, at 41.5°N 03.4°E, 20nm SE Spain.

On 13 Apr, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* (1), and Blackcap (1F) were sighted insect hunting aboard at 42.1°N 05.5°E, 65nm south of S. France.

A Redstart (F) was briefly aboard on 18 May at 40.0°N 01.3°E, and Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (7) about the ship on 20 May, at 42.9°N 08.3°E, 55nm SE Spain.

SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1996

A small falcon was photographed aboard MV Botany Bay (Met) on 26 June at 12.5°N 45.9°E, 9nm from nearest land, but identification was not possible.

On 24 Sept, a probable Black Kite *Milvus migrans* was reported aboard MV *Siratus* (Met), in posn. 13.4°N 42.9°E, 40nm NW Aden.

1997

MAJC & MGH recorded two single Hoopoes *Upupa epops* aboard on 2 Feb, at 19.1°N 38.9°E, central Red Sea.

On 6 Feb a Scops Owl *Otus scopus* was photographed aboard SS *Moreton Bay* (Met), in the southern Red Sea.

SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1996

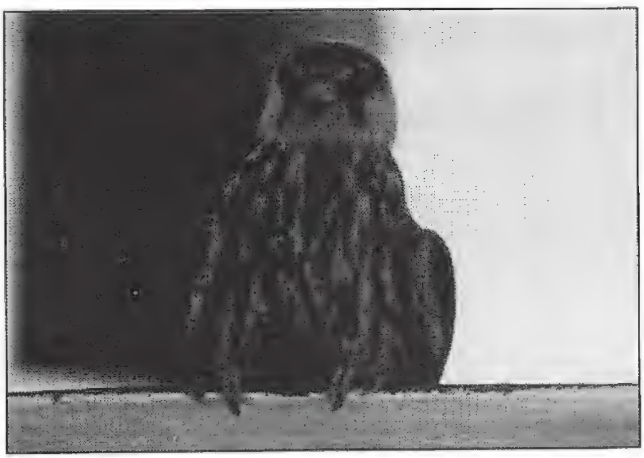
On 13 Sep, three white birds were first sighted, in the Arabian Sea (no position was given, but the vessel was "almost 400nm from the nearest land"), circling M.V *British Reliance* (Met), on passage Singapore to Fujirah. From description and sketch given these were clearly White Spoonbills *Platelea leucorodia*. It is remarkable that this is only the second RNBWS record of this species at sea, the previous one being in a similar area, on 10 Nov'95, aboard MV *Jervis Bay* (see *Sea Swallow* 45: 54).

MV *Jervis Bay* (see *Sea Swallow* 45: 54).

On 9 Dec PAW photographed a small "hawk" which landed aboard at 1014Z, in posn. 09.4°S 44.0°E. 120nm west of Aldabra The direction was not observed, but presumed to be from the direction of nearest land, Aldabra, to the east. It was obviously tired. It flew around the ship for two hours, alighting on main deck at frequent intervals. Food was placed out, but none was taken. At sunset the bird was seen off the port bow (Co. 213°T @ 14.5 kts.), in the direction of Aldabra, but was not seen next day. The weather and visibility was excellent, with light airs.

Six photos were taken from inside the wheelhouse, from which the raptor specialist, Richard Porter, confirmed identification as a juvenile Eastern Red-footed (Amur) Falcon ***Falco amurensis***. He commented "The position of the bird in early December fits well with the known migration of this species, which breeds in eastern Asia, and winters in SE Africa, thus making the longest sea crossing of any raptor.

COMMENT by MBC. This is the first RNBWS record of this species in this sea area. Full details and a photo were also to Frank Hawkins, currently working for BirdLife International in Madagascar, who responded with the comment: "It is an excellent record, and as far as I know the only record of an Amur Falcon anywhere near Madagascar. I have to say I am surprised they do not turn up from time to time in Madagascar, but possibly it is a matter of few observers and a vast surface area".



Eastern Red-Footed (Amur) Falcon *Falco amurensis*, aboard MV *Jervis Bay*, Indian Ocean. *Photo*: Captain PA Woods MN

SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1996

On 3 March, MV ***Tokyo Bay*** (Met) reported ten pink flamingoes seen flying westerly (estimated at 25 kts) parallel to ship, a few cables off port bow. The ship was passing through the Strait of Hormuz, on a course of 270°.

On 18 Sep, AS recorded (with several splendid photos), the following in

the central Persian Gulf at 26.5°N 51.8°E (60nm east of Bahrein): Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* aboard all day, also a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (juv. Race not determined). An Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* was found on the hangar roof, and a fleeting glimpse of a probable Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* landed aboard at 26.3°N 51°E on 19th. Two Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* were around ship, settling until disturbed, for seven hours on 5 Oct, at 23.8°N 57.5°E, 2nm off Wudam (Oman).

SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1996

At 0300 (local) on 25 March, a White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandia* was found aboard MV *Rangitoto* (Captain J. Deeny MN) (Met) in posn. 35.8°S 161.0°E, 500nm approx from nearest land (Cape Reinga), mid-way between there and coast of NSW.

On 19 May, a small owl seen flying round ship 0900z on MV *Singapore Bay* (Met), in posn 31.6°N 131.9°E, off Kyushu, Japan. It was identified from photos as a probable juv. Scops Owl *Otus scops*.

On 14 Nov, an unusual bird arrived aboard MV *Ormond* (Met), whilst transitting the Malacca Straits - at 02.6°N 101.3°E, 25nm west of Malaysia. It flew into the radio room and was photographed taking a close interest in the telex machine. It had a ring on one of its legs, and it appeared in good health. It was identified from photos as a Band-bellied Crake *Porzana paykulli*.

Off South America, DKB recorded two Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* aboard at dawn on 27 Nov, in posn. 14°S 77°W, 40nm off Peru. One left, but the other, probably a male, remained all day, occasionally making sallies to capture a phlarope *Phalaropus* sp., and to pursue petrels; one of these (probably Markham's or Hornby's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma markhami / hornbyi)* was caught, as the falcon was seen eating it, later in the day. Another Peregrine was seen close off Paita, at 5°S 81.5°W on 16 Dec. Others were seen from the ship in harbour at Antofogasta and Valparaiso, and during the northward passage under the Americas Bridge, in the Panama Canal.

On 23 Nov, DKB closely watched a bright yellow warbler aboard at 3.2°S 81.5°W, 70nm off Peru. The decription best fitted Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, but details did not exactly correspond with N. American races, illustrated in the field guides. Having passed close between the mangrove-covered banks of the Guayaquil River the previous night, it seems likely that a local species may have been picked up, and carried out to sea.

A Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was seen on 23 Dec at 1.7°N 79.5°W, 50nm NW Ecuador.

1997

On 14 Jan, a bird of prey was observed briefly aboard SS *Moreton Bay* (Met), as the ship was leaving Port Phillip (Melbourne, S. Australia) - 38.8°S 143.8°E. It was identified from photographs as a Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*, of the race *centralia*.

On 26 Feb, MAJC & MGH recorded and photographed a nightjar aboard

at 06.3°N 95.4°E, 20nm north of tip of N. Sumatra. With the assistance of Mark Adams of the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring, this was finally identified from the photograph as a Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*.

SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1995

On 2 Feb, CP recorded an Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* at 54.9°S 67.3°W, flying high over the ship, in the Patagonian Channels. On 7 Feb, he photographed a Dark-bellied Cinclodes *Cinclodes patagonicus* aboard for 20 mins. The ship was departing the Beagle Channel, in light winds and sea-state, when this bird flew from a small patch of floating seaweed. It then flew off to alight on another patch of seaweed.

Dark- bellied Cinclodes, Beagle Channel, February 1995.
Photo: Chris Patrick

1996

HT & SR recorded a close view of an unusual bird, 200yds west of Zodiac landing, at rocks near beach of north shore mid-island, Steeple Jason Is., (51°S 61.3°W). It was slightly larger than Black-throated Finches *Melanodera melandera*, and Robin Woods confirmed this identification from sketch as a Least Seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus* (probably an adult). A list of other species seen ashore was forwarded to the local Falkland authorities.

MBC

RECORDS OF RACING PIGEONS
Note by Editor

Four unusual long-distance records were received this year, all from the East Atlantic (Section A). They are summarised here, for convenience. Time did not permit me to try and trace and inform the owners of the fate of their pigeons, but details are published here, in the hopes that a reader may be interested to take up the challenge of doing so.

All dates are 1996.

A. On 9 January, a racing pigeon (ring no. ESP RFCE 100386) came aboard SS *British Ranger* (Met), whilst passing Canary Is, and remained throughout loading at Bonny, (Nigeria). On return passage to Galveston (USA), it disappeared on 4 Feb, when swell increased and waves shipped on deck overnight. Nearest land was Brazil 450nm to SW.

B. On 13 April, MV *British Resolution* (Met) was joined by a group of five racing pigeons, and one hawk whilst passing the Canary Islands. Three of the pigeons proved to be tame enough to note the particulars of their rings; RFCE 078697 ESP95, RFCE 174710 ESP 95 and RFCE 174363 ESP 95. These three stayed for only a few days and then disappeared with the hawk. However the remaining two took up residence on the bridge wings. After a few days they took the water offered but turned their noses/beaks up at the offered "hobb nobbs" and "alpen", accepting a home-made mixture concocted by the 2nd Officer. The pigeons stayed until Forcados on 23 Apr, and then flew away one evening, not to be seen again.

C. A racing pigeon was reported aboard MV *Kukawa* (Met), am. on 21 June, when 60nm south of Dakar, Senegal. It was caught on 22nd, when 6nm off Conakry, and left leg had plastic ring inscribed "2225 NEH4. SHOT 1995"; the right leg had a pink rubber ring marked "500".

D. On 23 June, another racing pigeon came aboard MV *Tokyo Bay* (Met), on passage from Southampton to Singapore. It first appeared at 43.7°N 9.6°W, 40nm off the coast of Portugal, in a tired state. It carried a ring no. 018340/539 LB 95, and was fed with biscuits and water. It was joined next day by a second pigeon, and both remained throughout the passage, fed daily on peas and fresh water. It was expected they would be tempted to leave on passing Gibraltar, or during the transit of the Suez Canal, but they remained, sitting in available shade; as the temperature increased their activity decreased. They disappeared on 8 July, the day before arrival in Singapore.

I would be interested to hear of the outcome of any successful enquiry.

MBC

LANDBIRD RECORDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA 1979-1995

by Captain P.W.Jackson, M.N

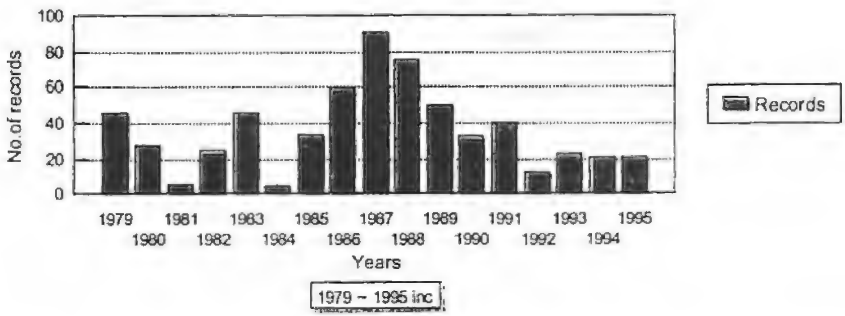
After reading Michael Casement's article in *Sea Swallow* 45 on "50 years of Landbird Observations at Sea", I wrote to him regarding his conclusion, and offering any assistance that I might be capable of rendering. In reply, Michael Casement suggested that I might like to make a start with the Mediterranean, which is an area I know reasonably well, having spent the best part of the last twenty years thereabouts. He also suggested that I might like to try and deduce any patterns. This appealed greatly to me as I have an interest in climatology, particularly weather associated with ocean currents, (eg Sahel drought - El Niño) and perhaps changing migration patterns could be allied to known weather events.

The next decision to be made was how to record the sightings to enable analysis. I have a commercial bird recorder programme for personal records, but this proved inadequate for the envisaged task, so I decided on a database using Lotus 123, which could be 'played with' any which way, whenever.

Some 17 hours later I had entered all Mediterranean landbird sightings from *Sea Swallows* 30-45 into the database. Altogether, there are 606 sighting records of identifiables, which encompasses 160 separate species. Of the latter, there are 71 single specie records, which rules them out for analysis. Similarly, records of less than four sightings, particularly by a single observer, seem inadequate, thus the arbitrary decision was made to 'analyse' records of birds having four or more sightings.

In order to deduce pattern, an inspection of records per year was necessary, which immediately ruled out any hope of pattern conclusions. As the following chart clearly shows, the variable number is inadequate for this purpose.

Landbird Records in the Mediterranean Sea
Sea Swallow Nos. 30-45 inc.



All was not lost however, as I decided to separate the records into regions, again arbitrarily deciding on the three, which might prove of interest: West Med (between the meridians passing through Europa Point and Cape Bon), Centre Med (between the meridians of Cape Bon and West Crete), and East Med (between the meridians of W. Crete and E. Turkey).

I noticed that a monthly count per region was also available and also the first and last dates of each species. (COMMENT. For reasons of space and complexity these two tables are not included here, but if any reader would like to study, please contact me, or the author. MBC)

The following interesting "facts" emerged:

Swallows and **Robins** migrate in both directions, along the complete length of the Mediterranean;

Swifts and **Grey Herons** do not appear in East Med; **Chiffchaff** and **Hoopoe** do not appear in the Centre Med; **Spanish Sparrow** has not been recorded in West Med; whilst all regions show a northward migration of **Turtle Dove**, there are no sightings from West Med of a southerly movement in autumn; there is a lack of **Black Redstart** sightings northbound in spring, from West and East Med.

In terms of sightings, the "top" birds are: Swallow (39 records), Robin (33), White Wagtail (30), Black Redstart (22), Chaffinch (19), Turtle Dove (19), Chiffchaff (16), Kestrel (16), Redstart (16), Lesser Whitethroat (12) and Hoopoe (12).

Finally, there are three records of unidentified bird flocks being noted on radar displays. Michael Casement states that he tried to stimulate others regarding this possibility, and it has been a fact of which I was aware when passing through notable regions of migration, at suitable times. I never saw such a sight, but note that the three records came from ships of the same company, and that Michael says he has not been able to repeat such observations with modern radars.

The only observation I have, and hesitatingly offer, is that, if further benefit is to be gained by future analysis, the trend in declining number of sightings needs to be reversed.

P.W.Jackson, 42 Poplar Road, Bishops Itchington, Leamington Spa CV33 0RQ.

FURTHER ANALYSES

Note by Editor

I am indeed grateful to Peter Jackson for this first attempt to make fuller use of past *Sea Swallow* records. This is a good example of what may be done using computer techniques, and I hope others may be tempted to make similar attempts. If anyone would like to have a go, please let me know.

MBC

BREEDING SEABIRD POPULATIONS ON SANDA, SHEEP ISLAND AND GLUNIMORE, (FIRTH OF CLYDE), IN 1996

by Colour Sergeant Peter Carr RM and Robert Morton

INTRODUCTION.

The Royal Naval Birdwatching Society (RNBWS) mounted an expedition to survey the breeding seabirds on Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore, in the Inner Hebrides, between 3-7 June 1996. RNBWS results have been combined with counts undertaken by Morton who was conducting ringing studies on the islands between 22-30 June and 20-28 July. The results are presented and are compared with counts of the breeding populations of the islands by Morton in 1987. Population trends over the ten-year period are discussed.

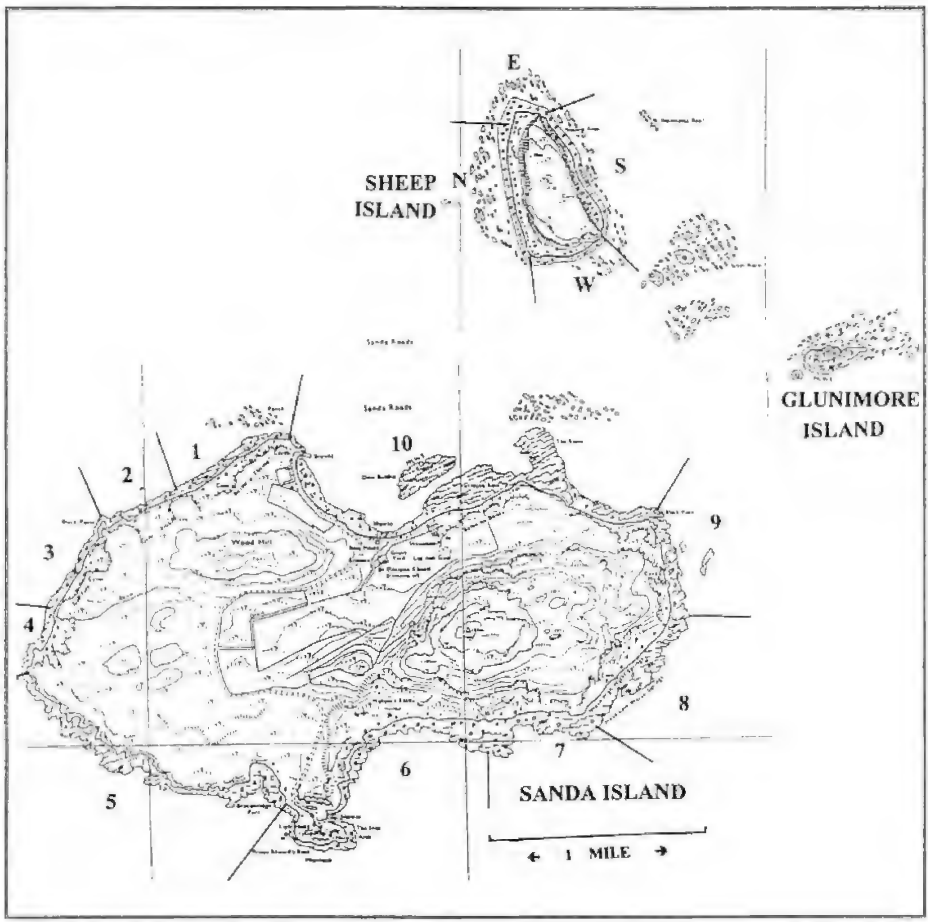
Sanda, and its two associated islets, Sheep Island and Glunimore, lie in the Firth of Clyde, approximately 3 miles south of the Mull of Kintyre, Argyll. Sanda is roughly 3 miles long by 1 mile wide at its widest point. Its terrain is reminiscent of upland moorland, rising to a peak of 123 metres at its highest point. Very few species of birds utilise these barren upland areas for breeding, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* being the most numerous. The coastline of the island is made up of steep cliffs or scree and boulder fields. These provide nesting habitat to numerous Northern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, auks *Alcidae* sp. and Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Several small grassy coves exist providing breeding habitat for gulls *Larus* sp. Eiders *Somateria mollissima* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*. An area of sodden bog forms a part of the western coastline in the vicinity of the lighthouse, this is the only area where Common Gulls *Larus canus* breed.

The much smaller and less disturbed Sheep Island is a miniature version of Sanda. It has a greater density of breeding auks and gulls. Glunimore is the smallest of the three islands and unlike the other two is a rock outcrop with very little vegetation. Glunimore holds the largest number of breeding Guillemots *Uria aalge* and the only breeding Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

Razorbills and Puffins
photo: Captain Chris Peach RN

SURVEY TECHNIQUES

After receiving permission to visit the island from Scottish National Heritage and Richard Gannon, the land owner, RNBWS deployed six members in early June 1996, to conduct a full breeding bird survey of Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore. In accordance with the methods used by Morton previously, the islands were broken down into segments. Map 1 illustrates the breakdown for standardised survey purposes, Glunimore was counted as a whole.



Map 1. The coastlines broken down into segments, for standardised survey work.

The six RNBWS members operated in two teams of three. Team one counted the segments in a clock-wise manner, team two anti-clockwise. To enhance accuracy each segment of coastline, where possible, was counted from the bottom and the top. A boat was employed to count cliffs not visible from the land. The same technique was used for the survey of Sheep Island. Any major differences in the totals of breeding birds counted by the two teams in any segment resulted in a recount of that species in the disputed segment by a new combination of three members. Morton_s counts used the same segments.

The survey methods used by RNBWS and Morton for assessing breeding seabird populations, where time and terrain permitted, followed methods now comprehensively detailed in the authoritative Birds Census Techniques (Bibby, Burgess & Hill 1992). The same survey techniques have been used to count the islands from 1987 through to 1996.

RESULTS

Table 1. Breeding Seabird counts of Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore 1996. (Pairs).

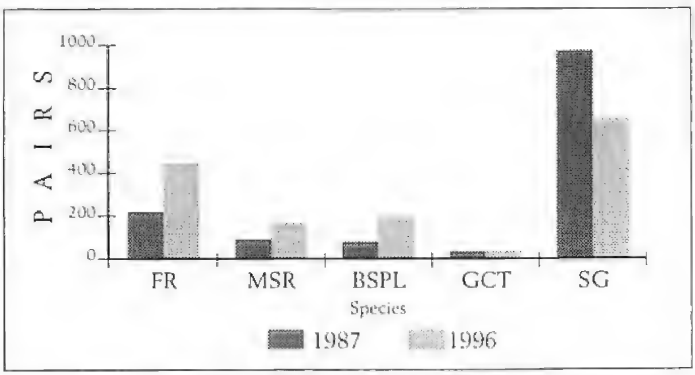
SPECIES	SANDA	SHEEP	GLUNIMORE
NORTHERN FULMAR	284	135	30
MANX SHEARWATER	175	0	0
BRITISH STORM-PETREL	200	0	0
GREAT CORMORANT	0	0	27
SHAG	400	215	5
COMMONGULL	50	0	0
LESSER BLACK-BACK GULL	106	52	0
HERRING GULL	390	640	40
GREAT BLACK-BACK GULL	7	18	10
RAZORBILL	320	2500	180
GUILLEMOT	25	20	2450
BLACK GUILLEMOT	68	51	0
PUFFIN	26	240	30

Table 2. Other breeding species counts on Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore in 1996. (Pairs).

SPECIES	TOTAL PAIRS	SPECIES	TOTAL PAIRS
SHELDUCK	0-2	WREN	4-5
MALLARD	1-2	DUNNOCK	0-3
ELDER	20-30	STONECHAT	2
RED-MERGANSER	0-1	WHEATEAR	15-25
BUZZARD	1	BLACKBIRD	1
PEREGRINE	1	SONG THRUSH	1
OYSTERCATCHER	25-30	SEDGE WARBLER	10
RINGED PLOVER	3-6	WHITETHROAT	3
ROCK DOVE	2-5	WILLOW WARBLER	10
SKYLARK	5-8	STARLING	2-3
SWALLOW	1	RAVEN	1
MEADOW PIPIT	30-50	HOODED CROW	2-3
ROCK PIPIT	30-50	TWITE	7-10
PIED WAGTAIL	6-6	LINNET	2-3
		REED BUNTING	5-6

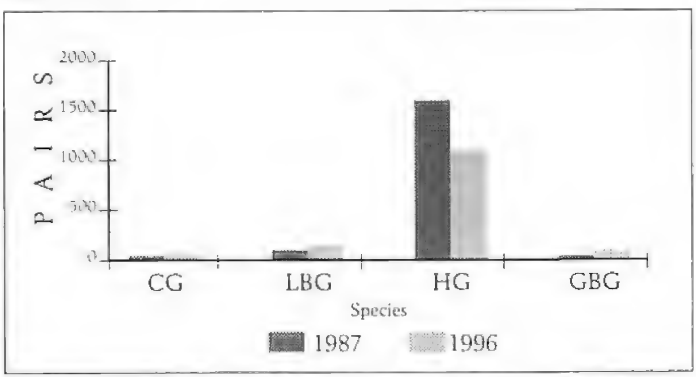
Graphs 1 to 3 compare, by use of Bar Graphs, the breeding seabird populations on Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore in 1987 and 1996.

Graph 1. Petrels, Shearwaters and Cormorants.



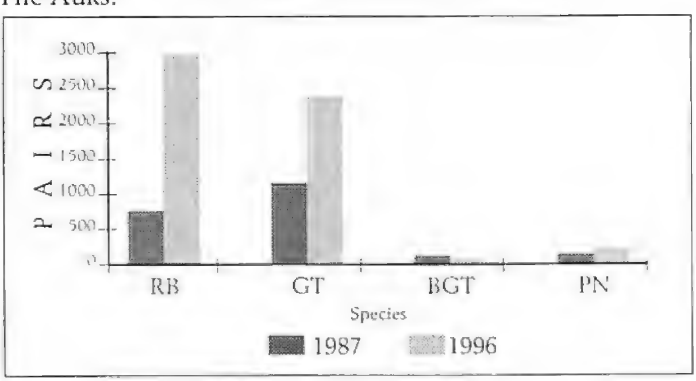
FR = Northern Fulmar MSR = Manx Shearwater BSPL = British Storm-petrel
GCT = Great Cormorant SG = Shag

Graph 2. The Gulls.



CG = Common Gull LBG = Lesser Black-back Gull HG = Herring Gull
GBG = Great Black-back Gull

Graph 3. The Auks.



RB = Razorbill GT = Guillemot BGT = Black Guillemot PN = Puffin

DISCUSSION
SEABIRD POPULATION TRENDS ON SANDA FROM 1987 TO 1996

PETRELS, SHEARWATERS AND CORMORANTS.

Northern Fulmar populations on the islands, in particular Sanda itself, have followed the well documentated increase of the British population throughout this century (Fisher 1952, Cramp *et al* 1974). The population has increased from an estimated 235 pairs in 1987 to 449 in 1996.

Both British Storm-petrels and Manx Shearwaters require the knowledge of breeding burrow locations, counted over a period of years to assess accurately breeding population dynamics. It would appear from the figures stated that the populations of both species have increased, at least by 100% over the given period. However, it cannot be stated that this is in fact a real increase; it may be merely an improvement on the locating and recording of breeding burrows. All that can be said is that the breeding population of both species is now thought to be in the region of 200 pairs.

Great Cormorant numbers over the ten-year period have remained at around 25 pairs, all breeding on Glunimore. Shag numbers appeared to have dropped by about one third over the period, however, as highlighted by Aebischer (1986), Shags are not always annual breeders. Counts by Morton (1995) over the ten-year period have resulted in widely fluctuating totals; an annual mean breeding total for Shags for the ten-year period would be appoximately 730 pairs.

THE GULLS

The trends of the breeding gulls on Sanda over the past decade have generally followed national trends for the species involved. Breeding numbers of **Great Black-back Gulls** have remained relatively stable over the ten year period, this fits in with the national trend, in that little numerical expansion has occurred post 1970. (Gibbons *et al* 1994).

Common Gulls have remained in low numbers, and probably the nesting habitat will dicatate that they are never numerous. However there has been an increase in their numbers over the ten-year period arriving at a figure of 50 pairs in 1996, exactly double that of 1987. Coastal populations are known to have increased in the given ten-year period (Lloyd *et al* 1990), and Sanda birds appeared to have followed this trend.

Lesser Black-back Gull has in 1996 a numerically superior breeding population to the 1987 population, however this is the first count throughout the period that has surpassed the 1987 figure (Morton 1995). The population of this species on Sanda is in a state of flux and requires to be monitored further to establish whether 1996 provided a one-off year with exceptionally high breeding numbers, or there is in fact a population expansion occurring on the island.

Herring Gull, by declining from 1,650 pairs in 1987 to a little over 1,000 pairs in 1996 has followed recent trends. The British coastal breeding population was estimated to have nearly halved between 1969 to 1987 (Lloyd *et al* 1990); it appears this national decline is continuing, at least on Sanda.

A small population of **Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*, that counts back to 1987 reveal was never larger than 70 pairs, finally abandoned the islands in 1995. The reason why this population gave up the islands as a breeding area will

never be ascertained, though it has been suggested that the attention of avian predators may have been one of the major contributing factors. (Morton 1995).

THE AUKS

As illustrated in Graph 3, there has been a dramatic increase in the recorded number of breeding **Guillemot** and **Razorbill** on the islands between 1987 and 1996; the former have all but doubled their population, the latter have increased by fourfold. **Puffin** and **Black Guillemot** have both had slight, but not substantial increases.

The populations of Guillemot in SW Scotland have been noted as increasing in recent years (Gibbons, Reid & Chapman 1994), therefore the increase from 1,250 pairs in 1987 to approximately 2,500 pairs in 1996 is a welcome regional trait that the Sanda population has been following. Razorbill, although regarded as another difficult species to census accurately, appears to be following the interpretation of national counts (Lloyd, Tasker & Partridge 1990), in that its breeding population has also substantially increased between 1987 and 1996.

SUMMARY

A general summary of the breeding seabird populations on Sanda, Sheep Island and Glunimore throughout the period 1987-1996 would be that the populations are, with the exception of the now extinct Kittiwake, relatively stable or slowly increasing.

As a postscript, the trapping of a female American Mink *Mustela vison* on Sanda in July 1996 could have catastrophic implications on these primarily terrestrial breeding populations. A future monitoring programme of the islands and the possible effects of the spread of Mink would be a worthwhile study.

CONCLUSION

The RNBWS expedition in conjunction with Morton's activities, proved a very fruitful and rewarding venture for several reasons: Firstly, the publishing of the breeding bird counts provides a historical and accessible document against which future monitoring programmes of the island can be measured. Secondly, the invaluable "in the field" ornithological census experience gained by the six participating members can be utilised by the society and other organisations, or as individuals in the future, possibly a small nucleus of experience on which future RNBWS seabird census expeditions can call upon.

And last, but not least, the memories that Sanda has provided the team members. The incredible tameness of the incubating seabirds, the haunting call of Manx Shearwaters as they circle the island at night, or the awesome sea crossing to reach the island initially - these memories will remain with us forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Commander Chris Peach RN, Lt Cdr John O'Connell-Davidson RN, C/Sgt Pete Carr, CPO Adie Snell, L/Wtr Simon Hurst and Miss Laura Cuthbert, the six participants, would like to thank the following people and organisations for assistance or advice given freely in the planning, executing and writing up of Exercise Sanda Seabird Study: Rab Morton, without whom the expedition

would not have been possible; Comacchio Group Royal Marines, for two craft and two extremely professional Landing Craft ratings who piloted them; MOD Police NATO Jetty, Cambeltown, for their assistance and a place to sleep when the weather was too rough to leave Campbeltown on the first day; Scottish Natural Heritage, for permission to visit the island; Richard Gannon, the islands' owner, for permission to land on his land, and for allowing us to sleep in his boat-shed when the tents were destroyed in the storm on the second night, and to John Utley - Seabird Study Group - for allowing access to the previous seabird counts on Sanda.

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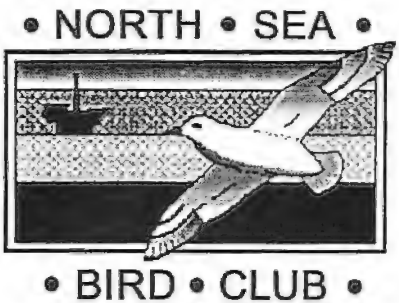
The " Sanda Team" with Sheep Island in background

HIGHLIGHTS OF BIRDING ACTIVITIES ABOARD A NORTH SEA OIL RIG

Floating Production Platform *Buchan Alpha* 1993-97

by Paul F. Baker



I am delighted to accept Michael Casement's invitation to write this article highlighting birding activities aboard a North Sea oil rig. Unlike ships at sea, oil platforms have a fixed horizon and with no land-falls, ports of call etc. could be considered very sterile. There is, however, an up-side to this as, in the case of *Buchan Alpha* being on a main migration route, a continuous and systematic record of wildlife movement may be correlated. Wildlife is the correct description as records are not restricted to birds, and include insects such as butterflies, moths, and hoverflies; *cetacea* - whales, dolphins and porpoises; and mammals such as seals, (mainly Common and Grey), and bats.

The North Sea Bird Club is the pivotal point for all ecological interest in this region and is based at the Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, some 15 miles north of Aberdeen. This is an out-post of Aberdeen University which is financed by various oil companies, as corporate members, and supported by many individuals with mutual interest working in this sea area. The Club was formed in 1979, with the aim of encouraging off-shore workers already gathering records, and to stimulate others to participate in this worthwhile pastime. All records are submitted to the Club Recorder who in turn transposes them onto a computer database, from which information may be used to compile Quarterly Bulletins (*The Fulmar*), North Sea Bird Club Annual Reports, and scientific papers, and may be accessed by other interested parties. In addition to visual sightings, specimens, such as dead birds and insects, may also be sent ashore. After detailed examination, the birds find their way either into the Club's own skin collection or to the British Museum, if of skeletal value. Insects always prove most useful for study at the University Zoology Department. Birds found alive, on the other hand, usually exhausted but sometimes injured, enjoy a far better fate. The three main helicopter carriers - Bristow's, Bond and British International - have historically been happy to transport any such to "the beach" where they may be immediately released or cared for by the Club. Additionally, Bristow's have donated a freezer where specimens may be stored until time allows for collection.

Since it's inception, the Club has received many thousands of records many of which could, in the birding sense, be considered 'headliners' and an impressive list of major and sub-rarities has built up over the years. A sample of these would include Pacific Swift, Cream-coloured Courser, Sabine's Gull,

Brünnich's Guillemot and Dark-eyed Junco with Gyrfalcon, Spotted Crake, Bluethroat and Yellow-browed Warbler making up an admirable centre rank. Even Flamingo, Muscovy Duck and Budgerigar have put in appearances, while Britain's only ring recovery for Little Bunting comes from this area. There have of course been the odd novelties too with a Lanceolated Warbler being found (alive) down a ship-borne toilet, and occurrences of Redwing taking dead Greenfinches as food.

From a personal standpoint, a little background information may be in order. As a mariner I am more or less confined to working on semi-submersible (floating) rigs of which there have been three. My first unit, in 1990, was the drilling rig *'Hunter'*, part of the Stena Group, which was mainly involved working east or west of the Shetland Islands, this being only commercially viable during the summer months. The accommodation barge *Borgland Dolphin* was only involved with work in the North Sea Central Sector, during my time there, as is my current rig *Buchan Alpha*, which is exclusively assigned to production. There is a continuous three weeks on three weeks off regime, and days are split into 12-hour shifts with most personnel being required to undertake night duties in turn. The "graveyard watch" is not popular with all, but for the birdwatcher it is ideal, giving maximum daylight hours not working. This, combined with carefully selected "stake-out men" allows maximum cover but the byword is "selective". The idea is to choose those who at least have an inkling as to whether a bird is a potential rarity and await a call if one should appear. This I learned very quickly as an over-enthusiastic Geordie motorman burst into my cabin, mid-way through my sleep pattern, announcing, "eagle on the heli-deck". This turned out to be a Short-eared Owl that had been in a similar position for the previous five days - wot diplomacy !!

Inevitably, any article such as this will include a list, of sorts, with my personal oil-rig tally standing at 117. Here the reader may consider a little ornithological licence has prevailed, as a couple of these - Whooper Swan and Pink-footed Goose - were 'scoped' from the rig while temporarily laid up, at anchor stacked in the loch at Invergordon. The list also contains my own *piece de resistance* (but as yet not accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee), a River Warbler. This was found on 8 October 1991, while in *Hunter*, drilling west of Shetland, in one of the most inaccessible of places - it had become caught in the winch-drum housing, high in the derrick, about 70 meters above sea level. Release was of prime importance but with the deck consisting of just two steel girders this was a risky operation. Attempts were made, but caused the bird more distress and also dislodged some feathers, so were abandoned. But the close proximity allowed for a detailed description, which was submitted, together with the feathers, to the BBRC.

Early additions included all of the common seabirds and some migrants and one or two less expected species. A Jack Snipe obligingly flew into a window and was closely followed onto the list by Snow Bunting, Purple Sandpiper and Merlin. Manx and Sooty Shearwater showed within the first year, but surprisingly only a couple of times since. Spring and autumn migration has been recorded every year, and at all locations, of many thousands of birds, the most numerous being Starling, Redwing and Fieldfare. At these times, Merlin, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine, Long-eared and Short-eared Owl are all but guaranteed, and a Goshawk was present during one autumn movement, in

September 1995. Before leaving *Hunter* in late 1992, the list had grown to 58 with no other surprises except the arrival of a Red-breasted Merganser (on a particularly stormy night that had curtailed drilling) crashing straight through the glass window in the "dog house" (driller's cab) scattering the coffee-quaffing crew in all directions. All those big lads scared of a little duck?!

Another 17 additions were made during a brief six months on the *Borgland Dolphin* the first three of which - Jackdaw, Common Scoter and Eider - were all seen within the confines of Dusavik harbour Norway. These have in turn been recorded off-shore on subsequent occasions. Once on location, again in the Central Sector, the highlights included adult Iceland Gull, Greenshank and what is regarded a North Sea rarity, Whimbrel. There were also unseasonal (June) appearances of Long-tailed Duck and Little Auk.

Buchan Alpha 57° 54'N 00° 02'E. By contrast, I consider *Buchan Alpha* to be the Portland Bill of the North Sea. Stark and bare, she obviously sticks out in the sea and is an excellent catchment for migrants. Like "the Bill" she has amassed a formidable list of birds, over the 15 years on location here, which includes Bean Goose, Barn and Tawny Owl, as well as Richard's Pipit, all recorded before my time. Arriving here mid-1993 my first achievement was to catch up on a number of more common species which had thus far eluded me. Common and Arctic Tern, Pomarine Skua, Puffin, Black Guillemot and Glaucous Gull all seemed long outstanding from the "maritime division" and Skylark, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Greenfinch from the "shore-siders".

Those final few months of 1993 proved productive, with the addition of Redshank, Woodcock, Common Snipe plus Reed Warbler and Reed Bunting in consecutive months, while Great Grey Shrike, (mercilessly hunting Siskin), and a Common Rosefinch (unfortunately found dead) added some rarity value. A spring Black Redstart started off 1994 to be joined, late summer and autumn, by Knot, Ruff, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling and Pied Flycatcher. The year was getting longer but my "stake-out men" were ever alert as I was advised on my hot line, "geese swimming on the port side"! Needing a "stand-in" at my job, I recruited the first person to hand (notice how unimportant one becomes when there's a 'tick' in the offing) and dashed to the heli-deck. Not a sign - don't these people know anything about birding? A tannoy announcement had the caller ring again with better detail and on the second visit a group of six Greylags were seen just a few metres from the rig. Up to 1995, duck species had been conspicuous by their scarcity but that was to be corrected in a one half-hour period on 2 April, when a single Shelduck, Mallard (4 male + 4 female), 30 Teal and a male Tufted Duck all passed the rig, with a Long-eared Owl also in attendance. An otherwise quiet summer was enlivened by a most unexpected Fieldfare on 19 June. Red- and Black-throated Diver (both very much under-recorded in the North Sea) were sighted, respectively, at each migration, with Turtle Dove, Mistle Thrush, Tree Pipit and the afore-mentioned Goshawk, which arrived on 19 September roosting high in a crane jib. October ended with a Barnacle Goose running the gauntlet of gulls and making an ungainly landing on the heli-deck where it stayed for six days but preferring to commute to the sea at night. The year ended with a 'flush' of Redpoll.

In 1996, landbirds showed in the first week, represented by Wood Pigeon and Fieldfare, while a pristine male Eider swam close by, but it was late April before the first true migrant, a Wheatear, put in an appearance. The first half

of the year remained fairly quiet until the "spun yarn radio" once again crackled into life and an informant delivered news of a raft of Auks close to the rig "but one of them is all black with white on the sides and a short 'red' bill" ! After the lunacy of the Ancient Murrelet incident I feel sure most birders live in hope of something similar on their patch and more than one idea of an "exotic" passed through my mind as I located the said birds. Unfortunately it was not to be, but the adult Moorhen was a most welcome new sighting.

It was August before anything else new turned up. As I was watching a Willow Warbler pick-off aphids, using the heli-net as a perch, suddenly a similar but much larger bird arrived to share the victuals just a few yards from my position. A detailed description was soon taken of this most obliging and delightful Icterine Warbler. Some days later the fog crept in, out of which appeared a large 'fall' of birds, probably attracted by the flare, including two Sandwich Terns noisily circumnavigating the platform and a juvenile Red-backed Shrike. The latter stayed on the rig for a couple of days during which time it was seen to take a Large Yellow Underwing moth, and pecking through the cranium of a moribund Meadow Pipit.

October saw the latest addition to the list with not one, but two Water Rails putting in separate appearances on 2nd and 12th. Both were exhausted, and were caught and later released to continue their journeys south. At the time of writing (March 1997), things are just beginning to show, with some north-bound seabird movements including Gannet, Common Scoter and a first winter Glaucous Gull, while landbirds have been represented by fair numbers of Redwing, Fieldfare, Starling and Blackbirds and single Goldcrest, Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Wood Pigeon, Turnstone and a freshly dead House Martin picked up on 1st March.

Finally, participants of our mutual interest only have to go on a 'twitch' or a casual birding afternoon to realise the number of anecdotes that abound, one of which I would like to relate here. After a particularly heavy storm, our ever attentive Stand-by Vessel the *Cromarty Tide* rescued a small bird on her aft deck. Calling me up on the UHF the Captain observed, "you're an expert in these matters Bagsy" (my nickname); and a transfer was arranged. Gingerly hoisting the bird aboard the rig, in a Twix box stuffed with paper towel, it was seen to be a Storm-petrel, seemingly in good condition except a little waterlogged. All afternoon it was kept in the warmth of the Marine Control Room, offered fish and fish oil and received a few visitors. At regular intervals the paper was changed and all in all it was getting better treatment than the rig crew. At the change of the watch, the little fella seemed in fine fettle, with much wing-stretching and scurrying around, so "the expert" decided it would be best returned to it's own environment. Under cover of dark, the wind and waves having subsided, the box and contents were gently carried to the lee side and with a few well-wishers in attendance the bird was released. It was seen to fly to the sea, alight and commence a few "sea trials", at which point a Great Black-backed Gull appeared from nowhere and swallowed it whole. The moral of this story has to be, "it's always handy to have an *expert* in attendance" !

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TO VALPARAISO AND BACK

by David Ballance

From 24 October 1996 to 11 January 1997 I was a passenger in MV *Lublin*, of Polish Ocean Lines, making a voyage from Hamburg and Antwerp through the Panama Canal to Valparaiso, returning to Bremen. On the outward journey we called at Guayaquil, Callao and Antofagasta, and on the return at Huacho, Paita and Guayaquil. *Lublin* is a semi-container ship of 13,000 tons; we took out manufactured goods of various kinds and returned with a cargo largely of fish-meal, with some coffee and frozen fish. I went on the voyage largely to see the bird-life of the Humboldt Current.

Unfortunately we went down the Elbe after dark on 24 October, but the passage up the Scheldt on the 26th was interesting, with a lot of waders and duck, three species of goose (Greylag *Anser anser*, White-fronted *A. albifrons*, and Brent *Branta bernicla*) and a little southward passerine movement, accompanied by a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* and a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*; the N.W. suburbs of Antwerp even yielded a passing Buzzard *Buteo buteo*.

We left Antwerp on the 30th and saw few birds of interest between there and the Azores, apart from a few Great Skuas *Catharacta skua* in the Bay of Biscay, a Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, and some Cory's *Calonectris diomedea*. We were off Santa Maria in the Azores on the morning of 4 November and were here joined by a Northern Water-Thrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*, which obligingly perched on a crane-cable for close inspection. On the evening of the 5th, a Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* came aboard, and was returned to the sea the next morning. One or two Cory's Shearwaters stayed with us until that afternoon, but we were then birdless until early on the 10th, when a Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* appeared, presumably at maximum reconnaissance range from the Virgin Islands. As we neared Puerto Rico that afternoon, more frigatebirds were seen, harrying a party of Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* and Sooty Terns *S. fuscata*, and we were circled by a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rusticus*.

The dawn of 11th found us in the Mona Passage, with three species of booby - Brown *Sula leucogaster*, Masked *S. dactylatra*, and Red-footed *S. sula* - moving NW across our course to their feeding grounds. Later in the morning there was an excellent view of a Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* crossing our bows from the direction of its Hispaniolan mountains. The deep waters of the central Caribbean yielded very little, but by noon on the 13th we were in sight of the cloudy mountains of Darien.

We had to wait two days in the Roads for a Canal passage. The most unexpected bird here was a Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis*, which flew round us in the heavy noontide heat on the 15th, but there were also sightings of Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, several species of heron *Ardea* sp, and Ringed Kingfisher *Ceryle torquata*. Unfortunately most of our Canal passage was after dark, but before the swift dusk fell I saw several Tropical Kingbirds *Tyrannus melancholicus*, and two Crested Oropendolas *Psarocolius decumanus* flew low over the ship in the Gatun Lock, with their conspicuous yellow tails.

There was not much to be seen in the deep-water crossing from Panama to Ecuador, but we awoke on 18 November to find ourselves at anchor off the Guayaquil River on a greeny-brown sea crossed by long files of Brown Pelicans

Pelecanus occidentalis, and overflown by sinister parties of Magnificent Frigatebirds; by noon, at least a thousand of these could be counted at one sweep of the bay. There were also Blue-footed Boobies *Sula nebouxii*. Our passage up and down river, through the mangrove swamps and shrimp-farms of the Estuary, took place at night, but we were to get good views on the return journey.

At dawn on 23rd we were heading south off Tumbes, on the Ecuador/Peru border. For the next two days we sailed through the strange waters of the cold current in slightly misty weather. Even in sunlight, the water is not blue, but has a strange grey-green opaque appearance, with smooth patches, and in certain lights a bronzey sheen. For the next two days, the abundance of birds was specially interesting in its blending of northern, tropical and southern elements. From the Arctic, there were rafts of phalaropes *Phalaropus* - perhaps mostly Red *P. fulicarius* - amounting to several thousand in all; small parties of Sabine's Gulls *Xema sabini*; and a variety of skuas *Stercorarius* sp., of every age and morph. From North America there were Laughing Gulls *Larus atricilla*, which were soon outnumbered and then replaced by Franklin's Gulls *L. pipixcan* as we went further south. From the tropics there were many Waved Albatrosses *Diomedea irrorata*, hardly able to lift themselves clumsily off the sea, in the light wind, and one or two of the strange Swallow-tailed Gulls *Creagrus furcatus* - looking as if incompetently assembled from a number of other species, with the pattern of a faded Sabine's, and a slow, ponderous flight, so that from behind they could appear egret-like. More unexpectedly, there were about ten small, dark shearwaters which I could only identify as Christmas Shearwaters *Puffinus nativitatis* - it was difficult to think what else they could have been. But, if this is correct, they would be somewhat to the east of their mapped range.

From the south, there were many Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus*, and good numbers of White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, rising clumsily from under the bows. On the 24th, Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* abounded, and I found that overnight the Pelicans had changed from Brown to the huge Peruvian *Pelecanus thagus*; at the same time the Blue-footed Boobies gave way to Peruvian *Sula variegata*.

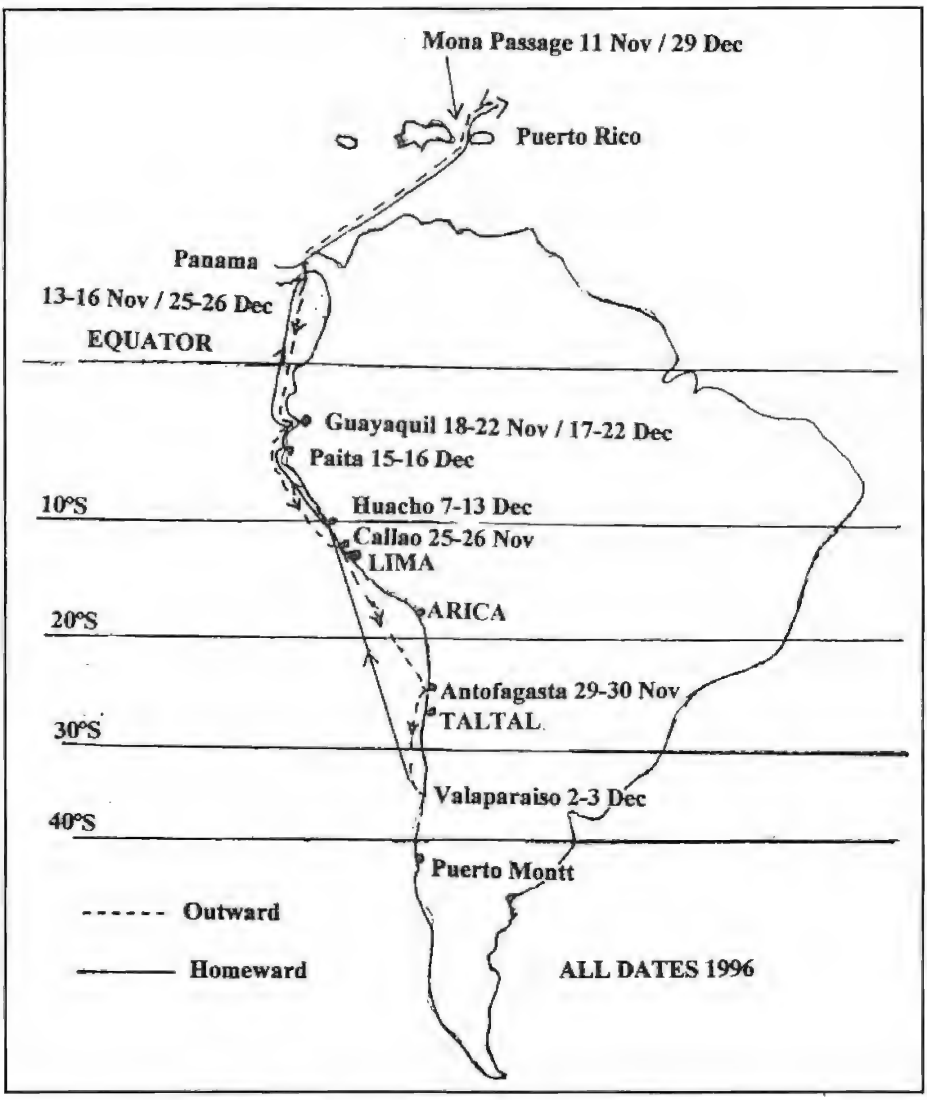
We entered Callao at dawn on the 25th. Apart from a distant roost of terns *Sterna* sp., which could not be closely inspected for "security" reasons, the most interesting bird was the locally dominant Band-tailed Gull *Larus belcheri*. We left at dusk on the 26th.

The passage from here to Antofagasta gave us the full splendour of the desert-nesting birds of the "Guano Coast". At dawn on the 27th, long files of mixed Guanay Cormorants *Leucocarbo bougainvillii* and Peruvian Boobies were moving across our course. At one moment, a single flock viewed from the forepeak covered eight binocular widths; some of these, and the Peruvian Pelicans, came almost within touching distance. The dominant storm-petrels here were Markham's *Oceanodroma markhami* and Hornby's *O. hornbyi*: the former like tiny melanistic Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*, the latter with distinctive breast-bands. The first Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* and Inca Terns *Larosterna inca* also appeared.

We made another of our dawn entries, into Antofagasta, on the 29th. This is a fascinating place, a large town in an utterly waterless landscape, which owed its development as a nitrate port largely to British enterprise. The port

has a large population of Peruvian Pelicans; the dominant gull here is the desert-nesting Grey Gull *Larus modestus*, which is very attractive at close range in its gradation of subfusc colours - a Gadwall-like *larid*.

We left Antofagasta on the afternoon of the 30th and continued to Valparaiso, which we reached at dawn on 2 December. In this passage we saw a few Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti* in small parties, far out in the sea. Other interesting species to be seen were gadfly petrels *Pterodroma* sp.; all that were close enough to be identified fitted the description of Stejneger's Petrels *Pterodroma longirostris* from the Juan Fernández Islands, which were more numerous on the return journey. There were also albatrosses *Diomedea* sp. of which 75 were seen on 2 December; all that were seen clearly appeared to be Buller's *D. bulleri*, from New Zealand.



At Valparaiso we discharged the remnant of our cargo, mostly Volvo trucks, and after a quick turn-round started on our return trip, with decks clear and holds empty. We left Valparaiso on the evening of the 3rd and arrived off our next port, Huacho, in Peru, on the 7th.. There were a few highlights, such as the arrival of a Swallow-tailed Gull to perch on a crane, but this leg of the voyage was less interesting, being in deeper water. The commonest species was Stejneger's Petrel, one or two of which could usually be seen from the bows. On the 6th we saw our last Buller's and at dawn on the next day our first Waved Albatross. Variety was provided by Pink-footed Shearwaters *Puffinus creatopus* and two Red-billed Tropicbirds *Phaethon aethereus*, as well as by the only sightings of White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria* and Juan Fernández Petrel *Pterodroma externa*.

Off Huacho, a bleak little desert harbour, we were six days loading fish-meal, with squads of 60 stevedores filling our holds from lighters. We had plenty of time to contemplate the vividly blue coastal water, the Black Vultures *Coragyps atratus* and Turkey Vultures *Cathartes aura* soaring over the town, the huge roost of Franklin's Gulls (at least 15,000) and the delightfully patterned Inca Terns which sat in rows along the lighters. On some mornings thousands of Guanay Cormorants and Peruvian Boobies flew north along the coast and there were occasional parties of phalaropes and Hudsonian Curlews (Whimbrel) *Numenius phaeopus*. This was the only place I saw Black Skimmers *Rynchops nigra*. Eventually we moved north to the rather attractive little port of Paita: overnight, back to warm-water, with Brown Pelicans and vast congregations of Magnificent Frigatebirds in attendance on the fishing boats. Yet another gull, the Grey-headed *Larus cirrocephalus*, was dominant here, and Franklin's, so common in the Humboldt current waters, were being replaced by Laughing Gulls.

After only a day we were off again for Guayaquil, to complete our cargo of fish-meal among the hustling banana-boats. This time we negotiated the Estuary both ways in daylight, and were able to have distant glimpses of colonies of Roseate Spoonbills *Ajaia ajaja*, and good views of several species of heron and of White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*. An island in the Estuary was covered with a cloud of Magnificent Frigatebirds, for which the nearby fishing port of Playas is the attraction.

We celebrated Christmas in the Gulf of Panama, made a second night-transit of the Canal and had an uneventful and rather stormy passage from there to the North Sea. One unexpected birding thrill remained. We arrived off the Weser on 11 January to find ice-floes all round us. The long passage up the river was notable for a wide variety of duck, especially "sawbills" *Mergus* sp. There were at least 1,000 Goosanders *M. merganser* and 240 Smew *M. albellus*; parties of up to 15 drakes of the latter were a spectacular sight from the deck as we moved through the frozen North German landscape.

For those interested in lists: I saw 173 species from the ship, not counting shore excursions. I should also add that for those with patience and plenty of time (and some tolerance for sauerkraut and "neck of pork") Polish Ocean Lines offer a wonderful bargain: the trip cost about £28 per day, all-found, with large, comfortable cabins, and almost no chance of spending money, except on liquor.

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SOME BIRDS OF THE HUMBOLDT CURRENT

by Bill Porteous

In late October and early November 1995, I was a participant on a voyage on board the MV *Alla Tarasova* from Guayaquil (Ecuador) to Puerto Montt (Chile) - see map previous article. The voyage was organised by Zegrahm Expeditions of Seattle (Washington) and the on-board ornithologist was Peter Harrison. The voyage followed the Humboldt Current and provided an excellent opportunity to study the birds off the west coast of South America.

In general, the birds seen and the latitudinal changes in the species observed were very similar to those noted in the same waters by Balance (previous article), which is hardly surprising considering the close coincidence of the season in which the observations took place. I will therefore not attempt a comprehensive review of the birds seen, but will rather concentrate on some observations of particular interest, and will also try to place on record some points from the literature which have previously not enjoyed wide recognition. I am indebted to Dr W.R.P Bourne for his assistance with the latter aspect.

Among the *Procellariiformes*, the three species of *Pterodroma*, three of *Procellaria* and two of *Oceanodroma* observed on the southward journey were especially interesting in respect of their latitudinal distribution. Of the gadfly petrels, **Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*** was first seen on 31 October at around 26°S, the last individual being seen on 2 November at around 33°S. **Stejneger's Petrel *P. longirostris*** overlapped slightly with *P. cookii*, being first encountered on 2 November at around 32°S and last seen at around 39°S south on 4th. One or two individuals of **De Filippi's Petrel *P. defilippiana*** were observed late on 4th at around 40°S.

Hornby's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma hornbyi*, 16-17°S, off southern Peru, 27 Oct '95. *Photo*: W.G. Porteous

The three species of *Procellaria*, perhaps to some extent coincidentally, did not overlap. **Parkinson's** (or Black) **Petrel *P. parkinsoni***, characterised by its light build, rounded head and somewhat bluish white bill with dark tip, was only observed in warm waters between Guayaquil and Paita (Peru) between 4°-5°S

on 21 October. No black *Procellaria* was subsequently seen for four days, but, on the 26th, around 16°S, the larger, heavier Westland Petrel ***P. westlandica*** with its ivory coloured, black-tipped bill was seen off and on all day. *P. westlandica* which, in contrast to its two congeners, is a winter breeder, and which is known to spend its early years in the Humboldt Current, was seen intermittently for about a week, the last one being observed on 2 November at around 32°S. After a gap of one day without a sighting of a black *Procellaria*, several White-chinned Petrels ***P. aequinoctialis*** were seen between 39-40° S on 4 November.

The storm-petrels *Hydrobatidae* comprise some twenty species, thirteen of which are included in the subfamily *Hydrobatinae* or "northern storm-petrels". Two species of *Hydrobatinae*, however, have a range which is predominantly south of the equator, and both of these - **Markham's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma markhami*** and **Hornby's Storm-petrel *O. hornbyi*** - were seen for the first time on 24 October near the Hormigas de Afuera islands off the city of Lima (Peru), at around 12°S. An individual of *O. hornbyi* came on board ship on the evening of the 26th, and was photographed before being released the following morning. A particular concentration of *O. markhami* was noted between 16-17°S on the 26th. Both species were seen intermittently until around 18°S, off the town of Arica in northern Chile, after which no observations of any kind were made at sea until the latitude of Antofagasta. Very little is known about the population size, conservation requirements or breeding biology of these two species. The popular literature (eg. *Handbook of the Birds of the World*) perpetuates the view, for example, that no breeding site for *O. hornbyi* is known. It seems likely, however, that observations of both these species near the coast, within a restricted range of latitudes in the austral spring, should provide a strong clue as to the location of breeding colonies, and Dr Bourne has kindly provided me with the key supporting evidence. Jahncke (1993) reported the discovery of a total of 1,144 inactive nests of *O. markhami* associated with saltpetre beds on the Paracas Peninsula, Peru. This site is located about 200kms south of Lima and receives some protection under the Peruvian National Parks system. For *O. hornbyi*, Bourne and Harris (1968) refer to the discovery of mummified remains in nitrate beds near Taltal and Santa Luisa, Chile, (25°S) and also to the presence in the British Museum (Natural History) of similar material from Taltal, from a nitrate bed at 5,000-6,000ft near the coast of Peru; and also from a site in the province of Tarapaca, in northern Chile, presumably at around 20°S.

My offshore observations of these species do not correlate exactly with the above records of breeding colonies onshore, and much work remains to be done. The remote and mountainous desert terrain militates against successful fieldwork, however, and it may therefore be some time before much more is known about the biology of the southern hemisphere *Hydrobatinae*.

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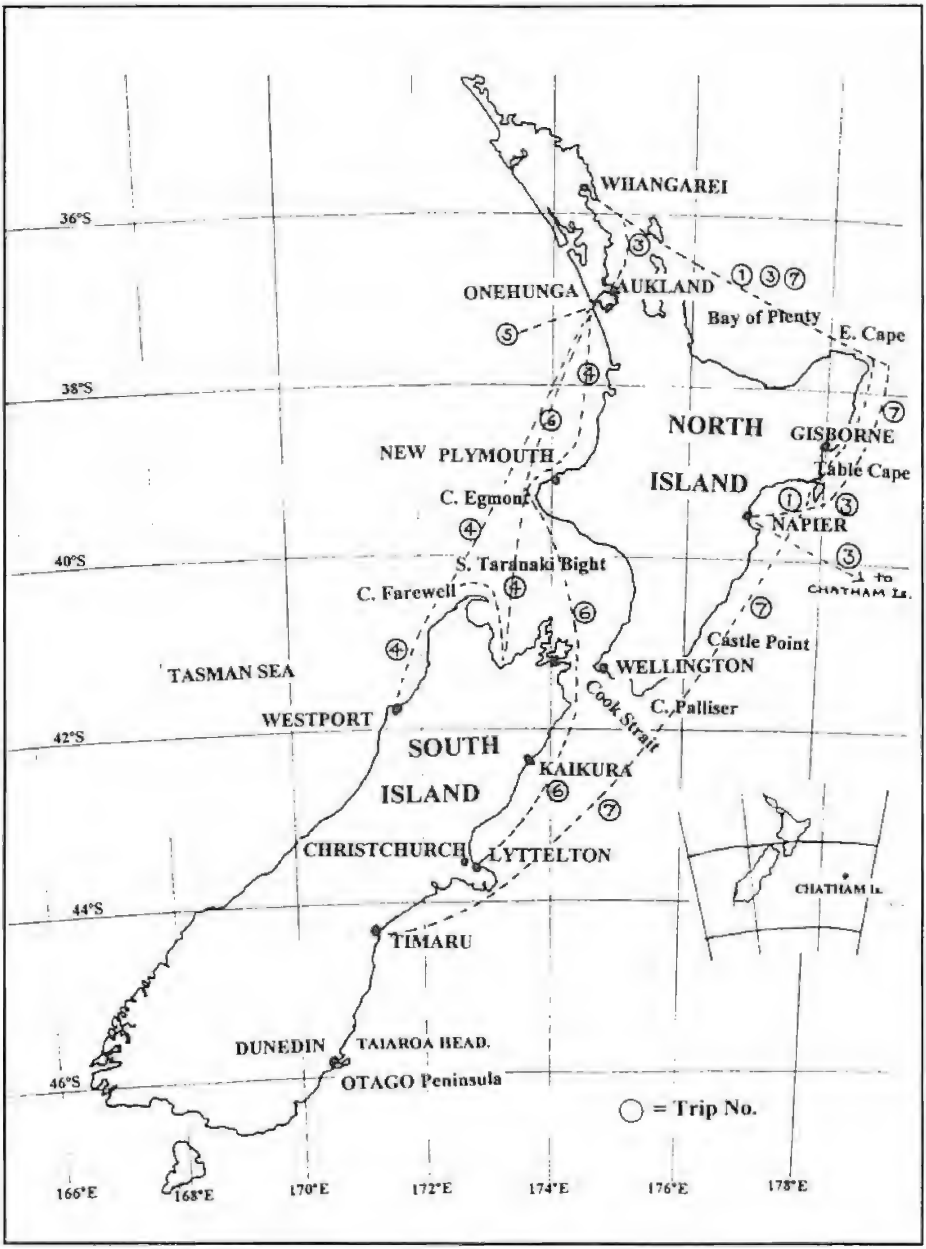
SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS AROUND NEW ZEALAND: May 1995 - April 1996

by Chris Jowett

Observations of seabirds were made on seven trips in New Zealand waters between May 1995 and April 1996.



Methodology varied somewhat between trips, dependant on the type of vessel involved. On all trips, observations were made on watches of 30 mins to 5 hours in duration, in a 180° forward arc to 500 metres when travelling, extended to 360° when stationary during fishing operations. Additional counts of 'ship-followers' were made and added to the watch counts. Uncertain records are marked with a *.

Trip 1. Observations were made **6-12 July 1995**, from the cement carrier *Golden Bay* off the eastern coast of the North Island, from Whangarei to Cook Strait. A total of 20,454 birds of 52 species were recorded from 42 hours of observations on 23 watches.

The most abundant (1000+) species were: **Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*, prion spp *Pachyptila* spp, Red-billed Gull *Larus scopulinus*, Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*, Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*,** Australian Gannet ***Morus serrator*,** and **Kelp gull *Larus dominicans*.**

Interesting records included:
Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma* - five seen off southern Wairarapa - Cape Palliser on 9th.
Chatham Albatross *D. (cauta) eremita* - six singles recorded over 40.0°S to 41.4°S, off Wairarapa and one also seen in Cook Strait 9, 10 and 11 July.
Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* - two over-wintering birds seen.
Grey petrel *Procellaria cinerea* - Surprisingly common (see *Notornis* 31(4), 1984),with 62 seen from 36.6° to 41.3°S.
Broad-billed Prion *Pachyptila vittata* - two seen, of East Cape, and another off Wairarapa.
Antarctic Prion *P. desolata* - 33 recorded from ten watches, most off East Cape and near Castlepoint.
Salvin's Prion *P.v. salvini - six seen, all at close range; identification from *desolata* based on lack of dark head and collar.
Narrow-billed Prion *P. belcheri* - 20 recorded from East Cape to Cook Strait.
Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* - one seen off East Cape.
Kerguelen petrel *Lugensa brevirostris* - eight recorded north to Cuvier Island
Juan Fernández Petrel *Pterodroma externa - one seen north of Castlepoint; identified by long-winged/tailed jizz, mostly white underparts and underwing, and grey upperparts, with dark 'M'-mark. (but see WRPB comment)
Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta - three possible intermediate-phase birds seen distantly in the Bay of Plenty and off East Cape; identified by pale face and belly, dark breast-band, short square tail. (but see WRPB comment)
Herald Petrel *P. arminjoniana - one probable seen on 8 July south of East Cape at 38.2°S 178.6°E; identified by grey upperparts with faint 'M'-mark, pale face and belly, dark breast-band, pale primary patches on underwing, dark upper-wing primary shafts, long tail (similar to *macroptera*).
Soft-plumaged Petrel P. *mollis* - seven recorded, four in the outer Bay of Plenty, 8th, 11th and 12th..
White-headed Petrel *P. lessonii* - one seen off East Cape.
Grey-backed Storm-petrel *Oceanites nereis* - a single bird recorded off East Cape.
White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria* - one off Cape Runaway on 8

July, with clear white belly.
Brown Skua *Catharacta lonnbergii* - only one sighting off Wairarapa coast.
*Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* - one possible recorded in Hauraki Gulf.

Trip 2. Over the period 11-13 August 1995, some 6,252 birds of 36 species were recorded from the stern trawler *San Torshavn* in 24 hours, from nine watches, mostly in waters outside the 200m isobath between East Cape and Napier (*c*80nm ESE).

The most common (100+) species were:
Grey-faced petrel, Salvin's Albatross *Diomedea* (*cauta*) *salvini*, Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophrys*, Cape Petrel *Daption capense*, prion spp, White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata* and Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea* .

Records of interest included:
Grey-headed Albatross - one recorded on 13th.
Chatham Albatross - four seen 12-13th between 38.6°S 178.8°E and 40.0°S 178.2°E - including a sub-adult bird .
Grey Petrel - common. 100 seen; 80 between East Cape and Table Cape.
Westland Petrel *Procellaria westlandica* - one seen off East Cape.
Broad-billed Prion - two seen east of Gisborne.
Antarctic Prion - 12, most in 1,000m+ water off Napier.
*Salvin's Prion - three seen closely lacked the dark head and collar of Antarctic Prion.
Narrow-billed Prion - ten seen, mostly 80nm off Napier.
Kerguelen Petrel - three seen off Matakaoa Point and Gisborne.
Soft-plumaged Petrel - two seen north of Matakaoa Point on 11th.
Grey-backed Storm-petrel - four seen in fishing grounds on 13th.
Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica* - one record, a single seen east of Gisborne.
White-bellied Storm-petrel - one seen 10nm north of Matakaoa Pt. on 11th.

Trip 3. During the period 2-10 October 1995, seabirds were observed from the cargo ship *Ngamaru III*, on its regular run between Whangarei - Napier - Chatham Is - Napier - Auckland. 37,306 birds of 58 species were recorded during 38 watches comprising 58.75 hours.

The dominant species (1000+) were:
Fluttering Shearwater, Australian Gannet, Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*, Sooty Shearwater, Broad-billed Prion, White-fronted Tern, Red-billed Gull, prion spp, Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*, and Kelp Gull.

Interesting sightings were:
Chatham Albatross - ten seen, all east of 180°, including five in Pitt Strait on 5 and 7 Oct.
Grey Petrel - nine recorded from the Mercury Is. to half-way en-route to the Chathams on 2, 5 and 8 Oct.
Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsonii* - one seen at 41.0°S 179.0°E on 5 Oct.
Westland Petrel - unexpectedly recorded en-route to/from Chathams, six seen 5th and 8th.

Broad-billed Prion - numerous 5th and 8th en-route Chatham Is.
Antarctic Prion - 68 recorded 5th and 8th en-route Chatham Is.
***Salvin's Prion** - two recorded on 5th, identification as before, at 41.4°S 179.4°E .
Fulmar Prion ***Pachyptila crassirostris*** - five recorded on three occasions: a possible on 5th and four in Pitt Strait, Chatham Is. on 7th. Identified by paler upperparts, more distinct black 'M'-mark and tail-band; and on 1st, sightings by diagnostic 'loop-the-loop' executed in flight.
Narrow-billed Prion - rare - nine seen on 8th at 41.5°S 179.6°E.
Southern Fulmar ***Fulmarus glacialoides*** - probable seen distantly on 8th at 42.8°S 178.3°E.
Black-winged Petrel ***Pterodroma nigripennis*** - an early arrival seen off Mercury Is., on 2nd.
Soft-plumaged Petrel - four on 5th as far east as 178.9°W.
Wilson's Storm-petrel ***Oceanites oceanicus*** - five on 8th, on return from Chathams.
Grey-backed Storm-petrel - eight seen - off Gisborne, and en-route Chatham Is.
Black-bellied Storm-petrel - four recorded en-route Chatham Is.
Chatham Island Shag ***Leucocarbo (carunculatus) onslowi*** recorded commonly in sea-watches off Waitangi Wharf, Chatham I. (33), and between there and Pitt I.
Pitt Island Shag ***Stictocarbo featherstoni*** - also seen from wharf - 44 - and on way to Pitt I.; colony seen in Flower-Pot, Pitt Island.
Brown Skua - only one record, from a seawatch off Waitangi Wharf.
South Polar Skua ***Catharacta maccormickii*** - four recorded: one dark-phase a 42.6°S 178.5°W; another two at 41.9°S 179.9°W, and a light-phase bird off White Island. Identified: pale phase, by pale creamy-buff head/underparts, blackish underwing, weaker bill/small-headed jizz; dark-phase birds by jizz and colder unstreaked body plumage, yellowish hackles.
Blue-grey Noddy ***Procelsterna cerulea*** - one seen off Volkner rocks, Bay of Plenty.

Trip 4. Six days, **31 Oct -5 Nov'95**, were spent on the cement carrier *Milburn Carrier II* off western New Zealand, south to Westport (South Island). Limited sea-time meant only 23 hr. 55 mins of observations were made from 18 watches, in which 5,944 birds of 45 species were recorded.

Most abundant (100+) species were: **prion spp, Sooty Shearwater, Pied Cormorant** ***Phalacrocorax varius*****, Australian Gannet, Red-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Flesh-footed Shearwater** ***Puffinus carneipes*****, Fairy Prion, and Common Diving-petrel.**

Interesting records included:
Antarctic Prion - four on 4th north of Farewell Spit.
Narrow-billed Prion - two seen off Kahurangi Point (Cape Farewell).
Fulmar Prion - one on 4 Nov showing diagnostic 'loop-the-loop' flight pattern at 39.5°S 173.3°E.
Kerguelen Petrel - two records on 4th and 5th. - one off Manukau Heads and another at 40.1°S 172.8° E.

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata* - three seen 4 Nov between Kahurangi Pt. and Cape Egmont.
Grey-backed Storm-petrel - one seen 4th north of Westport.
Pomarine skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* - recorded off north Westland and between Kahurangi Pt. and Cape Egmont, both on 4 Nov.
*Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus* - unconfirmed sighting of one 31 Oct off the Manukau Heads.
Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* - one seen 1 Nov in Port Taranaki, New Plymouth (see *OSNZ News*, March 1996).

Trip 5. Seabirds were surveyed from the tuna-troller *Marine Star II* off the west coast of Auckland from 5-8 January 1996, up to 40nm offshore. Thirty-one species were seen, with 20 watches of 21 hours recording 10,870 birds.

Most abundant (100+) species were: **Australian Gannet, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Pied Cormorant, Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*, White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*,** and White-fronted Tern.

Records of interest were:
*Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti* - one probable, separated from *cookii* by darker crown and mantle, and more extensive dark tip to underwing.
*Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera* - two probable records, on 7th and 8th; identified by dark sooty upperparts, more obvious diagonal bar on underwing.
*Juan Fernández Petrel - possible seen distantly on 6th; identified from *bulleri* by jizz (slim wings/long tail), less distinct 'skull-cap', flight, less patterned upperwings.
Kermadec Petrel - light phase seen behind boat on 8th.
Black-bellied Storm-petrel - one seen with *F. grallaria* and *P. marina* on 7th showed black belly-stripe.
White-bellied Storm-petrel - one seen on 7th on consecutive watches at close distances with *P. marina* and *F. tropica* at 36° 45'-54'S 173° 50'-58'E.
South Polar Skua - two singles - a dark-phase on 7th, and a light-phase close to the boat on 8th.
Pomarine Skua - only two seen (see *ASGN*: 30, 1996).

Trip 6. My first trip on the roll-on/roll-off freighter *Spirit of Vision* took place 16-21 January 1996, Between Onehunga and Lyttelton and return, in which 22,144 birds of 47 species were seen from 24 watches totalling 30.5 hours.

The commonest species (500+) were: **Prion spp, Fluttering Shearwater, Australian Gannet, Fairy Prion, Buller's Shearwater, Kelp Gull,** and **White-fronted Tern.**

Interesting records were:
*Cory's / Pink-footed Shearwater *Calonectris diomedia / Puffinus creatopus* - two sightings in the South Taranaki Bight area were made on 17th and 20th. The first sighting was at close distance >100m, but with the sun behind, while the second bird was in good light, but from over double the distance - both records were in flocks of *bulleri*. Identification: plain brown upperparts, white underparts/under-wings, flight like Buller's with wings bowed, but straighter,

flight also similar - slow measured wingbeats with long glides close to the water. Because of the constraints of distance and lighting, and plumage variability, specific separation unfeasible. (see also WRPB comment)
Antarctic Prion - five seen off Stephen' s Island.
Fulmar Prion - one showing diagnostic flight pattern off Stephens I .on 20th.
Narrow-billed Prion - one seen off Pelorus Sound.
***Kermadec Petrel** - single probable intermediate-phase seen off Stephens I. showed pale face area and belly and dark breast-band, underwing patches and short square tail.
South Polar Skua - one intermediate morph seen at 39.5°'S 173.7°E.
Brown Skua - one at 40.0°S 173.9°E.
Pomarine Skua - three seen, off Manukau Heads, Cape Campbell and Queen Charlotte Sound.
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* - sighting on 19th off Lyttelton Harbour showed dark primaries and trailing edge to underside of primaries.

Trip 7. A trip was made on the reefer *Chuiquita Jean* on **5-11 February 1996** from Auckland-Timaru-Napier, in which 45 species and 18,489 birds were seen, from 39 watches totalling 35 hours.

The following species were abundant (100+): **Hutton's *Puffinus huttonii*, Buller's** and **Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Kelp Gull, White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, Spotted shag *Stictocarbo punctatus*, Australian Gannet, Sooty Shearwater, White-fronted Tern, Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*** and **prion** spp.

.
Interesting records were:
Grey-headed Albatross - one recorded 10 Feb SW of Kaikoura.
Narrow-billed Prion - the only 'foreign' *Pachyptila*, one off Akaroa Head.
***Juan Fernández Petrel** - possible seen distantly near East Cape, identification as before.
Stewart Island Shag *Leucocarbo chalconotus* - unusual record of sedentary species well north of usual range - a bronze-phase at Port Timaru - pink feet seen.
Brown Skua - two seen - one off Mahia Peninsula, and one in South Canterbury Bight.
Pomarine Skua. Recorded off Mahia Peninsula and South Canterbury Bight.
Long-tailed Skua - two definite sightings in the South Canterbury Bight on 7th, in winter plumage showing grey upperwing coverts, dark primaries and secondaries, white shafts to only two primaries on upperwing, dark grey underwing dusky breast-band, flight more tern-like, distinctive slim jizz - especially wing-base and tight waist.

Acknowledgements.
I would like to thank the officers and crew of the following vessels for their assistance and hospitality, and the companies for the opportunity to travel on them (companies in brackets), *Golden Bay* (Golden Bay Cement), *Ngamars III* (Cook Is. National Line), *Milburn Carrier II* (Milburn NZ), *Spirit of Progress* (Pacifica Shipping), *Chiquita Jean* (Great White Fleet), *San Torshavn* (Sanford Fishing), and *Marine Star II* (Kermadec Fishing). And to those not covered

here, but inadvertantly omitted from the ASGN article (1996: 30) - *Albert Sanford* (Sanford Fishing), *Independence* (Moana Pacific), *Atu S* (Moana Pacific).

Finally, I would also like to thank Mike Donoghue, Department of Conservation, Aukland, New Zealand, for his support of the research in general, and for providing access to the computer facilities, without which this report would not have been possible.

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COMMENT:

This interesting series of observations includes a number of inadequately described hypothetical records. Those for Juan Fernández and Kermadec Petrels do not include enough details for the head and wing markings, respectively, while nothing is said about the size and build of the Cory's / Pink-footed Shearwaters, which might also have been, among others, pale-phase Wedge-tailed Shearwaters.

W.R.P.B.

Magenta Petrels *Pterodroma magentae* off the New Zealand coast with some comparative notes on similar species.

by P. R. Colston, P. Kennerley, P. Smith & A. Lamont.

On 4 March 1997, we sailed from Chalmers Quay, Otago Harbour, South Island, New Zealand, on board the "*Southern Spirit*" (53ft. sailing yacht with twin masts), owned and skippered by Grant Fletcher. The previous night had been very stormy with strong winds and rain and when we departed at 0800 the weather was overcast with squally showers combined with a strong blustery NE/NNE wind (F6 - F7). We were at sea for seven hours, and had intended to venture well offshore, but with the likelihood of deteriorating conditions we felt it prudent to keep within sight of the coast. We turned north after passing Taiaroa Head and headed across the bay in rough seas in a 5-10 ft swell. Sea watching was extremely difficult and uncomfortable during the first hour, but viewing conditions greatly improved when the rain ceased. During the morning we saw many small groups of Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* moving rapidly south down the coast (*c.*1,000 birds in total); albatrosses included Black-browed *Diomedea melanophris* (2), Buller's *D. bulleri* (8), Northern Royal *D. epomophera sanfordi* (8) and Shy *D. (c.) cauta* (40); also, Cape Petrels *Daption capense* (8), Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp.(1) Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*, (1) and a few Australian Gannets *Morus serrator*.

By 0915 the rain had ceased and, with a lifting grey sky, lighting conditions were good for viewing - a flat light without any glare. Between approximately 0930 and 1330, when we were *c.* 3-4 miles offshore, we logged four highly distinctive single *Pterodroma* petrels, each moving rapidly southwest down the coast. They passed within *c.*120-500 metres of the boat. We realised that these birds were unique and tentatively called them out as "Phoenix/Tahiti" Petrels *P. alba/rostrata* on account of their highly distinctive plumage pattern, i.e. uniform sooty-black upperparts, wholly blackish underwings with black hood and upper breast sharply demarcated from the white lower breast, belly and undertail. In at least one close individual a small whitish area on the chin extended on to the centre of the throat and was discernible against its black

hood. Also, some dark was noted narrowly extending along the upper flanks/sides of the body and a thin reflecting silvery line was briefly glimpsed running along the centre of the otherwise all-blackish underwing. Other features noted included: all black, heavy, thick-set bill; complete lack of any contrasting "W" or other markings across the upper wings, or any contrast between mantle, rump/tail.

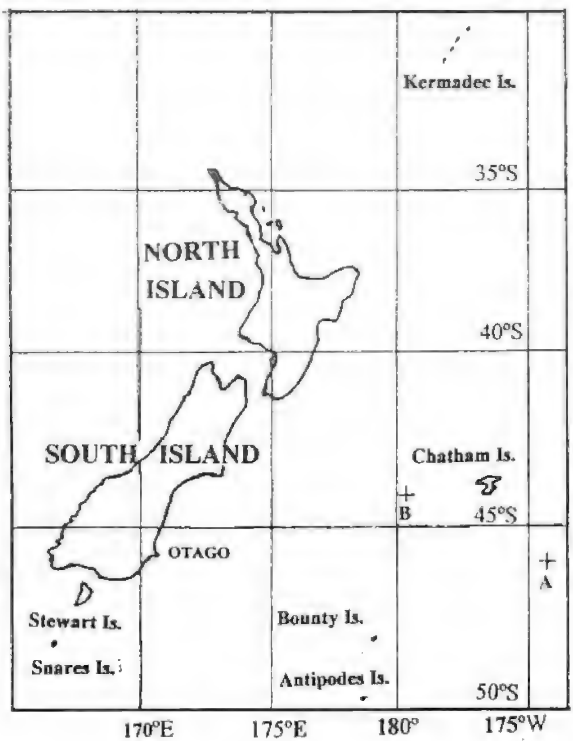
Discussion. These and other diagnostic features also noted (see below) indicated that they must have been the **Magenta Petrel** (or **Chatham Island Taiko**) ***P. magentae***, and excluded other possible confusion species discussed by Imber (1980), Eades & Rogers (1982), and Crockett (1994), e.g., **Soft-plumaged Petrel** ***P. mollis***, which has brownish-grey upperparts with darker "W" mark across wings and contrasting paler tail; also more white on forehead/throat, narrow grey neck collar and darkish underwing showing obvious paler areas across primary bases and secondary coverts. Furthermore, PRC is familiar with *mollis* in the southern oceans (*c*.300 individuals noted on voyages as recently as 1994). Other contenders discussed included **Herald** and **Kermadec Petrels** ***P. arminjoniana*** & ***P. neglecta***, but both show conspicuous white flashes on the underside of the primaries (extending inwards on *arminjoniana*) and *neglecta* shows obvious white primary shafts above. Furthermore, both show dark undertail coverts (white in *magentae*). The authors subsequently became familiar with the Herald Petrel having studied the species flying daily around its breeding cliffs on Rarotonga, Cook Is. (7-11 March 1997).

Between 14-19 March 1997, we quickly familiarised ourselves with our first **Tahiti Petrels** while on a cruise on board the cargo ship "*Aranui*" from Tahiti to the Tuamotu and Marquesas Islands. We encountered at least 90 individuals, and it was apparent to us that our earlier New Zealand *Pterodroma* sightings were of a totally different species. The plumage of the New Zealand birds was more sooty-black and the jizz was very different: more thick-set build, fuller head, shorter neck and robust body. The wings were considered to be shorter than those of Tahiti Petrels, enhancing each birds' rather more compact appearance in flight. However, we cannot be certain to which part of the wing this applied but suspect that both the forearm and the outer wing were shorter than those of Tahiti. Conversely, the weather conditions may have contributed in some part to this appearance as we did not see Tahiti Petrel in similar circumstances. The flight of the New Zealand petrels was powerful and consisted of several very rapid wing beats and then a glide in typical *Pterodroma* roller-coaster fashion shearing 1-3 metres above the sea. Tahiti differed in its proportionally smaller head, longer more slender neck, longer wings and more casual, languid flight (even in a freshening wind) banking low over the sea in unhurried fashion and quite unlike any *Pterodroma* species. Furthermore, Tahiti often revealed a brownish tint to the upperparts and generally showed diagnostic paler uppertail coverts.

The **Phoenix Petrel** also needs to be considered as it shows a similar plumage pattern to both Magenta and Tahiti Petrels, but differs in showing a narrow white leading edge to its sooty underwing. We have examined several photographs of Magenta Petrels which had been caught for examination and banding purposes on the Chatham Islands. These birds typically show a heavy chunky bill, large rounded head, thick neck and full bodied appearance similar in jizz to **Great-winged Petrel** ***P. macroptera*** or **Providence Petrel** ***P. solandri***

(PRC is familiar with both species in the field). Phoenix appears to be structurally quite different from Magenta in having a smaller head, more slender bill and body and long narrow wings. These features were also noted when PRC recently examined skins of Phoenix Petrels at the Natural History Museum, Tring. There are also excellent flight photographs which illustrate this (see Harrison 1987, p57).

Magenta Petrel (or **Taiko**). There are few recent acceptable sight records of this exceedingly rare and endangered petrel away from the Chatham Islands, where it was rediscovered in January 1978 (Crockett 1994). Earlier, Bourne & Dixon (1975) published a short account of an interesting *Pterodroma* sp. reported to them by Alan Rogers, which he observed on 28 November 1970, *c.* 400km SE of the Chatham Islands at 46.1°S 172.8°W, (see A on map) and which in their opinion agreed with the 'lost' Magenta Petrel. A detailed and convincing account is given by Rogers (1980), and probably represents the first recorded occurrence of the Magenta Petrel away from the Chatham Islands, since the original records in 1867. Dr. W.R.P. Bourne informs us of another possible Taiko record which also helps confirm that the range at sea may extend west of the Chathams. On 11 September 1974 he had a brief view of a couple of big, uniformly dark grey gadfly petrels with white bellies at 43.9°S 179.8°E, on passage from the Chathams to Lyttelton (see B on map). In the light of what has subsequently been found out about them he now thinks they can only have been Taikos. On the Chatham Islands, 42 individuals have been banded to date, and 12 recaptures suggest a population of over 100 birds (Crockett 1994).



Conclusion. Having compared our records with all the other available evidence, we are of the firm opinion that these four New Zealand birds were Magenta Petrels. Obviously this species is very scarce at sea, but regular cruises out from the New Zealand coast may show the Magenta Petrel to be using these waters for feeding purposes at the time when they would probably be in occupation of nesting burrows on the Chatham Islands, some 620nm NNE from Tairoa Head. By seabird standards, this is not far.

Acknowledgements. We are indebted to Dr. W.R.P. Bourne for his interest and encouragement, and for speedily supplying appropriate photographs and reference material, which greatly assisted in the preparation of this paper; Mike Wilson at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, for key references; and also the staff at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

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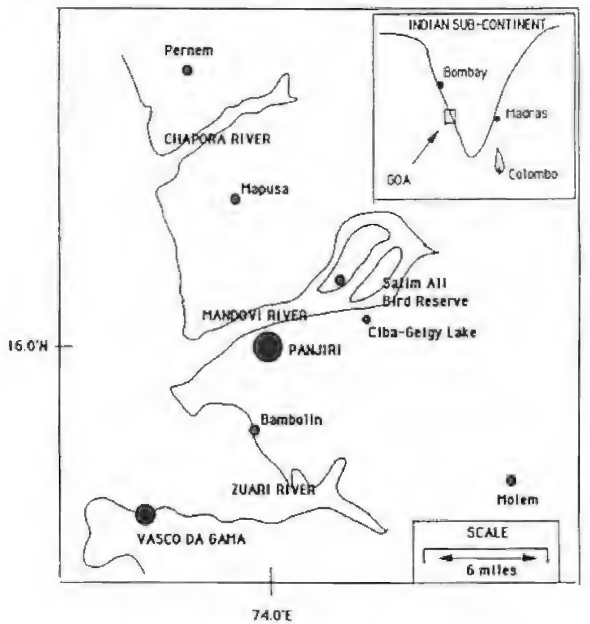
Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, at Currumbin, Queensland, 2 November 1993.
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

OBSERVATIONS OF SEABIRDS IN GOA
November 1995 and November 1996
by Stephen Hales

These notes are taken from two expeditions to Goa, the first in November 1995, and then again in November 1996. Many records are from land-based observations, but quite a few were made from a fishing boat owned by an obliging boatman with a passion for birds and crocodiles. Most of the birds were found in the Zuari Estuary (15.3°N 73.6°E) and the Chapora Estuary (15.7°N 73.6°E).



MAP SHOWING COASTLINE OF GOA

Indian Cormorant ***Phalacrocorax fuscicollis***. This species was quite scarce, and the only place it was recorded was along the Mandovi River at the Ciba Geigy Lake. The maximum count was three in 1995 and two in 1996.

Javanese Cormorant ***(Microcarbo) niger***. This species was quite widespread and fairly common. It was particularly fond of dense covered djeels and rice paddies where it could be seen fishing. Good numbers on Lake Carambolin near Old Goa, but the highest count was 50 at the Ciba Geigy Lake in 1996.

Heuglin's Gull / Yellow-legged Gull ***Larus heuglini / L. cachinnans***. Recorded only at Chapora. The count in 1995 was just over 100, but in 1996 there were over 150. Most were immatures and spent most of the day loafing on a sand bar.

Great Gull ***Larus ichthyaetus***. One was seen in 1995 at Chapora, but three were there in 1996. All were approaching full summer plumage with extensive black hoods. Not seen elsewhere.

Brown-headed Gull ***Larus brunnicephalus***. The most common gull, but difficult to census accurately as the flock tended to move about a lot in the

estuaries. Very evident at Zuari where between 200-300 birds were seen most days. At Chapora a flock of about 250 was present in 1995, but over 300 were there in 1996.
Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. Small groups of this species were seen at Zuari and at Chapora, in 1995. But only two were recorded at Zuari in 1996.
Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*. Two immatures were at Chapora in 1995.
Whiskered Tern *Caledonians hybridus*. Two were seen at an inland lake, near Bambolin, in 1996.
Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. At least 50 in Zuari and 35 at Chapora in 1995. But there were many more in the Zuari area in 1996, with average daily count of 80 with a probable maximum of 120. A smaller group of ten was seen in the Chapora Estuary. Five were also seen in 1996, fishing in an inland channel north of the Salim Ali Bird Reserve at Chorao.
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. 20 were seen at Chapora in 1995, but none were recorded in 1996.
Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. Six were seen flying around the boat, whilst crossing the Chapora Estuary in 1995, but none were recorded in 1996.
Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. 20 of this species (or possibly Saunders' Tern *S. saundersi*?) were seen at Zuari in 1995, and three at Chapora. During 1996 they were very scarce, with a maximum count of ten at Zuari.
Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*. 18 were recorded at Zuari, and ten at Chapora in 1995, but a maximum of 213 at Zuari, and 15 at Chapora in 1996. On both visits, most were immatures, and undergoing extensive wing-moult.
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*. 20 at Chapora in 1995. Only nine were present in 1996, but also 12 at Zuari. Again, most were immatures, and in extensive wing -moult.
Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. 11 at Chapora in 1995, but none were seen in 1996.

There are great opportunities for further sea-watching off the coastline. At Chapora, for example, there were many seabirds fishing well offshore and out of range from the beach. However a substantial and seaworthy boat would be required!

Landbirds.

The birds around the hotel were many, and included: Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*, Blossom-headed Parrakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*, Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*, Pompadour Pigeon *Treron pompadora*, Small Sunbird *Nectarinia minima*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* and Indian Pratincole *Glareola lactea*. The nearby Paddy Fields held both Red-wattled Plover *Vanellus indicus*, Yellow-wattled Plover *Vanellus malabaricus*, and Open-billed Stork *Anastomus oscitans*. Terek Sandpiper *Tringa terek* and Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* were seen nearby.

An inland trip to the Western Ghats produced some excellent birding. Species included: Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*, Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*, Large-crowned Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*, Verditer Flycatcher *Muscipapa thalassina* and Malabar Whistling Thrush

Myiophonus horsfieldii.
Over 200 hundred species were recorded, in both years.

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HENDERSON ISLAND AND ITS PETREL
by Dr W.R.P.Bourne

The naturalists who accompanied Cook on his first voyage of 1768-1771 collected many seabirds described and named by D.C.Solander (Lysaght 1959), but unfortunately while these accounts were often known to subsequent authors they were never published at the time. This has led to much confusion, especially with the gadfly petrels of the genus *Pterodroma*, when Mathews (1912) published Solander's accounts and postulated the possible existence of a number of additional species in the south Pacific. This was to some extent resolved by the work of the American Museum of Natural History's great Whitney South Sea Expedition between the wars, which confirmed the existence of one additional species, Murphy's Petrel *P. ultima*, but here also publication of the results was again delayed (Murphy and Pennoyer 1952), and still left some confusion. This has now been further reduced by the Pitcairn Islands Expedition (1991-1992) to the epicentre of the area of uncertainty, discussed at a symposium at the Linnaean Society in London in May 1994 (*Biol. J. Linn. Soc.* 56).

Apparently, while the avifauna of the Pitcairn group was devastated by the Polynesians in the prehistoric period, it still supports no less than four gadfly petrels, including, in addition to Murphy's Petrel, the Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*, and dark and pale forms of "Herald Petrel", which seldom interbreed, and differ in their calls, timing of their breeding season, and breeding distribution. An examination of their mitochondrial DNA indicates that while the light form, the true Herald Petrel *P. heraldica*, which is widespread in the South Pacific, may indeed be closely related to the polymorphic Trindade Petrel *P. arminjoniana* of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, as reported by Murphy and Pennoyer (1952), the dark form seems rather distinct, with a faster call and larger eggs, and breeds further inland with a peak in the winter. This may be better treated as a distinct species, the Henderson Petrel, named *P. atrata* by Solander (Brooke and Rowe 1996).

So far the story is clear enough, though it seems a pity that the opportunity was missed to compare the DNA of these birds with that of the Kermadec Petrel, with which they occur, and sometimes also appear to hybridise (Bourne and David 1983, 1985), or describe how to distinguish the Henderson Petrel at sea from all the other dark Pacific gadfly petrels (Bailey *et al.* 1989). Their status seems less satisfactory (Brooke 1995). While there are still a vast number of birds, including a quarter of a million pairs of Murphy's Petrel, breeding on Ducie Island, apparently *P. atrata* may now be reduced to a mere 16,000 pairs confined to Henderson Island. Another member of this group of gadfly petrels, the Phoenix Petrel *P. alba*, may also have been lost from the islands, possibly as a result of hybridisation, since the 1920s, and the birds were losing most of their chicks soon after they hatched to Polynesian Rats *Rattus exulans*.

Unfortunately the full implications of either the plague of rats or seabird breeding failure in 1991-82 were not fully explored. While it seems likely that the rats, apparently introduced by the Polynesians long ago, have wiped out much of the native avifauna, including the Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*, Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatis*, a smaller shearwater of the *P. assimilis/lherminieri* group, and White-throated Storm-petrel *Nesofregetta fuliginosa* (Wragg and Weisler 1994), if they presented a threat to the larger gadfly petrels surely these would have been lost as well? The situation in 1991-92 might also have been due to an oceanic fluctuation or ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) at the time (Kerr 1992). This is likely to affect both the rainfall (and so the fruiting of the vegetation, leading to an increase of rats) and seabird breeding success on the Pacific islands (Schreiber and Schreiber 1989), although the unusual nature of the situation remained undetected owing to the shortness of the expedition. Clearly it is desirable to visit such islands longer, and more often, to be sure what is happening there.

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BACK TO BERMUDA

by W.R.P.Bourne

Bermuda from the NE.
Nonsuch Island lies above the projection left from the airport runway.

The Bermudas, lying at 32°N 65°W, are the only islands in the western half of the central North Atlantic. Originally a submarine volcano, by the end of the Tertiary period something over a million years ago they had been eroded to a low platform some 500 km^2 in area, surrounded by coral reefs. During the fluctuations in climate and sea-level caused by the Pleistocene ice-ages they were periodically exposed and covered with drifting coral sand dunes, and then largely submerged again, until now only 50 km^2 of consolidated dunes remain above sea-level on the ESE side of the platform. At the time of their discovery by the Spanish about 1515, they were covered by a dense woodland of the large endemic Bermuda "Cedar" *Juniperus bermudiana*, various lesser hardwoods, and the endemic Palmetto *Sabal bermudana*. Since they were settled by the British in 1612 they have become first a naval base and then one of the World's great resorts and tax-havens, and the impact on the wildlife, and what has been done to save it, is of interest.

Our family arrived there as a result of a short-lived programme to evacuate women and children from Britain in June 1940, and remained until the spring of 1944, during which time I was aged ten to thirteen and already interested in birds (and their eggs). We had an exciting voyage out, a torpedo, presumably aimed at us as the largest ship in sight, hitting the next vessel in the convoy, until we sailed on ahead through sunny blue seas full of frilly Gulf weed with white birds with long central tail-feathers flying by, to enter a gap in a long coral reef and pass by low islands covered in bushy evergreen trees, with white houses and some clearings among them, to berth in the capital, Hamilton.

Bermuda was still comparatively undeveloped at that time, with much Cedar scrub and woodland, more Cedars growing between the fields and houses to form a nearly continuous canopy overhead, some derelict open ground kept clear by tethered grazing animals, some mixed agriculture, poor housing, and horse-drawn transport. Cars were banned, but there was a small railway running the length of the islands. There were already some areas of better houses and gardens with subtropical plants belonging to the richer natives and visitors, and huge new hotels with golf courses for tourists.

My brother and I were sent to school in Canada for the first winter, and when we returned in 1941 the islands were already changing fast. The tourists and expatriates had been replaced by construction crews building huge U.S. naval and air bases at opposite ends of the islands, rough diamonds with soft hearts who lived and played hard, and made good, if scandalous, company. Mother had found a little house behind the quay at Salt Kettle and taken a job as nurse to 2,000 "censorettes", reading other people's love-letters in the big hotels across Hamilton Harbour. We were left in the care of a local girl to run wild with her compatriates, children of the construction crews, our fellow evacuees, and the fishermen. By the time we left I had a sailing punt and a string of fish-pots (the only time I have ever made a profit - they are now banned), and knew all the local birds well.

WRPB, Bob Risebrough and David Wingate on Nonsuch Island, April 1997.

While Bermuda is visited by a great variety of bird migrants (Wingate 1973, Ireland *et al.* 1974, Amos 1991) there were few resident birds, but they were abundant (Crowell 1962, Crowell and Crowell 1976), including the white seabirds seen as we arrived, known locally as Longtails and elsewhere as Yellow-billed or White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*, Redbirds or Cardinals *Richmondena cardinalis*, Bluebirds *Sialia sialis*, Blackbirds or Catbirds *Dumetella carolinensis*, and the Chick o' the Village or White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*. My observations on them (Bourne 1957) turned out useful because they were the last before defoliating insects devastated the Cedars in the late 1940s, and the arrival of three new birds which now dominate the local scene - the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* and Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* (Crowell 1986). I failed to find the endemic Cahow or Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*, then thought to have been lost for three centuries (though it was actually first rediscovered by John Tavenier Bartram in 1862: Wingate 1964-65), but heard it was thought to survive at the other end of the islands, though this may have been Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*, now really lost, which we saw offshore.

It might be expected that with the increasing tempo of development the remaining native wildlife stood little chance of survival. The situation has been saved by a native Bermudian, David Wingate (1988), who arrived at Saltus Grammar School shortly after we left. He also preferred birdwatching to

school, and by 1951 had made such progress that he was invited to accompany Bob Murphy and Louis Mowbray in search of the surviving Cahows' breeding-places on rocks offshore. It transpired that the Cahows nest in the winter, and in addition to being vulnerable to mammalian predators were having their chicks killed by the Longtails, when they arrived and started to look for nests while they were still small. David Wingate has therefore constructed a massive "Government Housing Scheme" of artificial nest-sites with special narrow entrances to exclude the Longtails, with such success that he now has to build alternative accommodation for the Longtails as well.

When not engaged in speculative building, David Wingate has also reconstituted a sample of the lost natural environment by planting something over 10,000 trees and excavating two ponds around his headquarters in the old isolation hospital on Nonsuch Island, once used by William Beebe (1932) as a base for marine research. He has also helped promote through the local Audubon Society and National Trust the establishment of a couple of dozen other nature reserves elsewhere on the islands, whose population has doubled to over 60,000 since we were there.

David Wingate and Cahow nest with baffle to exclude tropicbirds.

At that time, in addition to bones of the Cahow, the Bermuda Museum also contained some remarkably large fossil eggs which now prove identical in their measurements to those of Steller's or the Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*, which breeds on the west-central North Pacific islands in the winter, and disperses north in the summer. It seems likely they are those of the closely-related English Albatross *D. anglica* from the lower Pleistocene deposits of East Anglia (Harrison and Walker 1978), and more albatross bones have now also been found by Brunell Spurling in Bermuda, so doubtless they once behaved similarly in the Atlantic. David Wingate reports, among other things, bones of Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, and a whole series of flightless rails (Austin 1962) have also been found in the pleistocene deposits, and those of a crow, an owl *Aegolius* sp., a woodpecker and a flightless passerine resembling a towhee *Pipilo*, in more recent ones, which seem likely to have been exterminated by pigs, rats, cats, and men in the century after the islands' discovery (Purchas 1625).

When my wife and I returned to Bermuda in April 1997, we found the

scene utterly changed again. The busy American bases and British naval dockyard had recently joined the long list of abandoned fortifications, and most of the bushy Cedars streamlined to withstand hurricanes had gone and been replaced by more upright exotic trees, which still looked very battered after Hurricane Emily ten years before. Nearly all the open space had been replaced by either introduced scrub or sprawling suburbia, and much of the rest made into golf courses, while the quiet white roads with their horse-drawn traffic had been upgraded, and became grid-locked with cars in the rush hour. There were some improvements - ordinary Bermudians no longer lived in hovels and dressed in rags with bare feet, while remaining cheerful despite their improved status - but it was no longer a twelve-year-old boy's idea of heaven.

From the point of view of conservation, it was impressive to see a year's crop of young Cahows (which seem to be a distinct endemic species) nearly equal to the whole population half a century ago, and find that the only surviving endemic landbird, the attractive and confiding little Chick o' the Village *Vireo griseus bermudianus*, which formerly appeared to be adapted for life in the foliage of the largely lost Bermuda Cedars, was managing to survive fairly well in the more varied vegetation that has replaced them. At least one of the new birds, the Yellow-crowned Night-heron *Nyctanassa violacea*, reintroduced by David Wingate (1982) in the 1980s to replace a lost native form, actually seems to be making itself useful eating the rather tiresome land-crabs, and the other introductions add greatly to the cheerfulness of the local scene, including even the handsome but disreputable Kiskadee, a huge, aptly-named South American tyrant-flycatcher imported to control the introduced *Anolis* lizards, which now preys upon everything else instead.

Bermuda now seems particularly interesting as an example of what can happen to a very small but remarkable and now exceptionally highly developed island, and what can be done by one person, David Wingate, to conserve it. The many caves in its coral sandstone contain invertebrates of wide and ancient origin (Iliffe *et al.* 1983), and there is abundant but unfortunately still undescribed evidence for the former existence of an unusual native bird community as well.

The story of the survival of the Cahow, due to its habit of nesting unobtrusively in deep holes in the winter, and its rescue, enabling it to fledge 28 chicks this year, together with the recreation of the native vegetation on Nonsuch Island, and rehabilitation of the vestigial remaining wetlands, formerly used as dumps, provides a model for the preservation of other endangered wildlife. This work deserves to be more widely known.

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Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificent* Carribean April 1994.
Photo: Chris Patrick

A BIRDING WEEKEND IN WILMINGTON

by Mark Cutts

I first contacted Dr Bob Wolk in early January 1996. Bob is a retired professor of Zoology and now works in the North Carolina Museum of Natural History as Field Trip Leader, and an administrator. Fortunately for me, he is also a member of the RNBWS and our local representative in the U.S.A. My initial contact was with the intention of gaining information on birding around the Wilmington area, and you can appreciate my surprise when I discovered that Bob was leading a field trip around the Cape Fear River the very weekend that my ship, HMS *FEARLESS*, was visiting, and that I was welcome as his guest.

Months passed, and on 14th May we were sailing up the Cape Fear on our way to Wilmington. White Ibis were everywhere with Great and Snowy Egrets, whilst Least Tern flew across the bows. That afternoon, Bob appeared on the gangway, pleasantries were exchanged and our first trip was arranged for the afternoon of the 17th. Our first visit in company of fellow birders, Nell and Eloise, was to Eagle Island, a large area of reedbed run by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Here we were greeted by Eastern Kingbird, common on any exposed perch, and enjoyed good views of Indigo Bunting, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Common Yellowthroat; also a variety of waders. The highlight of this area was the elusive Yellow-breasted Chat, often heard but seldom seen. After much perseverance we were rewarded with excellent views of this bright lemon-chested mimic. The evening was to be spent at Green Swamp, 30 miles to the south-west of Wilmington. This was with the sole purpose of seeing the very local Red-cockaded Woodpecker. As soon as we entered the woodland path we were rewarded with views of this constantly calling bird. Blue Grosbeak and Common Nighthawk were also seen that night, and an added bonus was seeing Venus Flytraps growing in the wild.

The actual field trip began the next day and promised a trip to a small sand islet called Ferry Slip Island (via the Fort Fisher Ferry Port) to see a tern and pelican nesting site. Whilst waiting for the boat, Painted Buntings were seen and we were soon enjoying the sight of over 2,000 pairs of breeding Royal Terns. Breeding Sandwich Terns, Brown Pelicans and Laughing Gulls also were present, and numerous other waders and terns. The afternoon was spent at a tidal basin behind the North Carolina Aquarium which produced Short-billed Dowitcher and Clapper Rail.

Day Two meant Battery Island, 100 acres of reed-bed, trees and shrub. Here was to be found the amazing sight of over 8,000 pairs of breeding White Ibis; amidst this spectacle another 1,000 pairs of herons and egrets were interspersed. Other treats included Wilson's Plover and Semi-palmated Sandpiper. Our final afternoon was spent searching for Eastern Bluebird and listening to an Orchard Oriole sing in the middle of Wilmington, as the sun set.

All in all, this was a very enjoyable weekend with good company which produced over sixty species and some unforgettable ornithological experiences. Anyone visiting this area would be advised to contact Bob Wolk, (See p.89 Ed.) or drop me line and I will supply any information I can.

LSA Mark A.J. Cutts, 92 Gale Moor Avenue, Gosport, Hants, PO12 2TW

RARE BIRDS

by Dr W.R.P.Bourne

There are two sorts of rare birds - endangered species, about which any information is likely to be useful, and vagrants, comparable to weeds, traditionally defined as plants growing in the wrong place, which now take up a disproportionate amount of space in the bird literature. It is entertaining to observe how land-based ornithologists, who have become obsessed with rarities, have floundered when trying to identify seabirds.

An astonishing demonstration of this is provided by the '*Chalice*' petrel, seen by a select crew of 'twitchers' (or rarity hounds) at 49.2°N 7.5°W, SW of the Scillies, on 3 August 1988, and immediately identified by the more knowledgeable as Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, until it came close enough to show a forked tail. Since then, the entire Flower of British Ornithology has apparently been engaged for nine years in anguished debate, based on the Twitcher's Law that "in case of doubt always assume that any bird is the least likely possible species", over which of the large, dark-rumped, fork-tailed Pacific *Oceanodroma* storm-petrels it might be (Gantlett 1989, Swash 1989, Hume *et al.* 1997, Young and King 1997, Force 1997). Meanwhile the details have been concealed from all outside observers, and absolutely nobody appears to have suggested that it was indeed a Bulwer's Petrel in tail moult.

Unfortunately, this sort of behaviour has become characteristic of the entire twitching fraternity when dealing with seabirds. A similar farce, also involving changes in appearance during the moult (Bourne and Curtis 1994), has been enacted over at least a baker's dozen British reports of McCormick's Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*, now found by Newell *et al.* (1997) to migrate south in hundreds past West Africa in the autumn, and many other species, including the Yellow-nosed Albatross Petrels *Diomedea chlororhynchos*, Cape *Daption capense*, Kermadec, Herald and Fea's Petrels *Pterodroma neglecta*, *P. arminjoniana* and *P. feae*, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* and Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* (although apparently they are prepared to accept almost any kind of tern).

The basic problem appears to be that with the growth of twitching, when in extreme cases people only stop to look at each bird once before going on to search for other new and preferably even rarer species, proof of identification has been reduced to a routine of checking each character listed in the latest guide, as in the MOT test for cars, produced of course to his own great profit by some member of the local rarity committee, which then insists on a standard of proof beyond all reasonable doubt otherwise only found in criminal courts. The omission of any fashionable field mark is thus liable to result in the public rejection of a record, so one wonders how many are invented?

Unfortunately this procedure seldom works with seabirds, which are liable to flash rapidly by only showing a few features in passing, though since there are not usually many likely species present in an area, and we would usually prefer to have a record of all of them, rather than detailed proof of the occurrence of only a few, we are usually satisfied with identification to the level of the balance of probabilities accepted by civil courts. Thus, for example, we feel a brief view of the white shoulders of a Great compared with the white underwing of a Cory's Shearwater, appearing briefly over the

horizon miles away, is usually sufficient to establish their presence for purposes of plotting bird distribution and numbers.

In view of the growing fastidiousness of rarity committees, it is often entertaining to study how little relation some local lists seem likely to bear to reality. The British List has been so thoroughly purged by zealots recently that most of the formerly copious bathwater has now been thrown out with the more contentious babies, so that it is now more remarkable for what it omits than what it includes (as with McCormick's Skua). Some strange things remain in the western Palearctic list purporting to portray usage in the forthcoming concise version of the *Birds of the Western Palearctic* also included in the August *British Birds*. There were actually quite a few perhaps excusable bugs in the original handbook, but it will be inexcusable if they are allowed to survive into the refined product.

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Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffins carneipes* at 30.1"S 159.5"E, Tasman Sea on 30 September 1993
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire MN

THE SMALLER NODDIES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

by Dr W.R.P.Bourne

There has been some uncertainty whether the smaller noddies should be treated as one species with a pantropical distribution, or two with complementary ranges, including the Black Noddy *Anous minutus* with a more sharply defined white cap and dark lores in the Atlantic and Pacific, and the smaller, paler Lesser Noddy *A. tenuirostris* in the Indian Ocean. Thirty years ago, after working up his observations there, Roger Bailey remarked that he had noticed that two of the small noddies from the central Indian Ocean in the British Museum (Natural History) had larger bills than the others, but that he had insufficient time to follow this up. I was also busy, and forgot about it until I saw the report by Stokes and Hinchey (1990) that groups of birds resembling both forms had been found breeding alongside each other on Ashmore Reef off NW Australia. I waited to see what was said about the situation in the *Australasian Handbook* (Higgins and Davies 1996) but, since it fails to elucidate it, have re-examined the specimens concerned.

The collection in the Natural History Museum at Tring (to whom I am indebted for assistance) does indeed contain two small noddies from the Indian Ocean with both much larger bills and darker lores than is usual there, from the vicinity of Minicoy in the Laccadives and about 200nm west of the Andaman Islands, and also some other rather similar but smaller birds from the vicinity of Malacca, Sarawak and the Torres Strait, although they are all very old specimens with little other data

Table I.

Measurements of small noddies with dark lores from the Indian Ocean area in the British Museum (Natural History) compared with those given by Higgins and Davies (1996) for Australasia and Murphy (1936) for the Americas.

Number	Origin	Wing	Tail	Culmen	Tarsus
91.5.20.754,	Nr. Minicoy, Laccadives, by 1891	237	119	50	22
78.2.13.41,	8°N 91°E, west of Nicobars, by 1878	229	106	45	23
91.5.21.172,	Malacca, August 1865, female	216	106	38	22
78.5.3.15,	4.8°N 115.4°E, off Sarawak, by 1878	212	99	35	23
46.9.1.9,	9°S 143.2°E, Torres St, 24.04.1845	213	99	37	22

Race / origin	No	Wing	Tail	Culmen	Tarsus
tenuirostris	8-13	212	110	40.5	21.9
Indian Ocean		204-216	103-119	38.2-44.2	33.5-36.7
minutus	23-27	223	118	42.8	21.5
Australia		212-233	109-125	38.6-46.5	31.2-36.3
minutus	4-6	227.5	120.5	43.6	21.6
Tasman Sea		219-234	117-124	40.6-46.2	20.7-22.5
diamesus	4	230	118	42.3	20.9
E.Pacific		224-239	111-125	37.0-45.6	33.7-35.5
atlanticus	12	230	116	45.3	22.3
Tropical Atlantic		225-240	110-120	42.1-48.1	20?-23.3

These specimens are difficult to interpret, and may either imply that birds of the Pacific type are liable to stray west along the equatorial current systems into the Indian Ocean, where the occurrence of some intermediate specimens (Higgins and Davies 1996) suggest that they may then hybridise with the small, pale local population, or alternatively that the two forms may breed alongside each other much further west than Ashmore Reef (Stokes and Hinchley 1990), in which case they should clearly continue to be regarded as distinct species. These birds deserve closer scrutiny in the field.

References.

Higgins, P.J. and Davies, S.J.J.F. 1996. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Vol. 3: 801-818.

Murphy, R.C. 1936. *The Oceanic Birds of South America*. New York, Vol. 2.

Stokes, T. and Hinchey, M. 1990. Which small noddies breed at Ashmore Reef in the eastern Indian Ocean?*Emu* 90: 269-271.

W.R.P.Bourne, Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, Scotland.

Australian Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* Adult male, aboard RV *Franklin*, 3nm off Fremantle, W. Australia, January 1996
Photo: Captain N.G. Cheshire

REVIEWS

CHECKLISTS

Beaman, Mark. 1994. *Palearctic Birds: a checklist of the birds of Europe, North Africa and Asia north of the foothills of the Himalayas.* Harrier Publications, Two Jays, Kemple End, Birdy Brow, Stonyhurst, Lancs. BB7 9QY. Pp. 168, ISBN 0 9523391 02, £12.50.

Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N. and Duckworth, W. 1996. *An annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region.* Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL. Pp. 294, map, ISBN 0 9529545 0 8, £10.00.

British Birds, 1997. *List of Birds of the Western Palearctic.* British Birds Ltd., Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. Pp. 12, £2.

The first two lists (referred to as PB and OB), providing complementary cover for Europe and Asia, contain notes trying to justify the classification and nomenclature adopted, which had already been done for an earlier version of the third (BB) in *British Birds* 85: 263-290 in 1993, when there was also a comparison in *Birding World* 6: 47-50 of the usages current at that time with that devised by Sibley & Monroe for their *Distribution and Taxonomy of the Birds of the World* (New Haven, 1990). The final version of BB above is now said to have been adopted for the much-needed concise edition of the *Birds of the Western Palearctic*. The species in PB and BB are arranged in a conventional modified "Wetmore" order, but with the notes at the back, while OB is in the fashionable Sibley-Monroe order with the notes in an obscure code in the text. PB and OB use loon, jaeger, murre, Mew Gull and similar Americanisms, presumably for the benefit of tourists, while BB retains diver, skua and guillemot. The treatment of seabirds usually differs from that in *Sea Swallow* (42: 16-27), but the lists might be useful ashore.

W.R.P.B.

ALL ABOUT THE PETRELS.

Warham, John. 1996. *The Behaviour, Population Biology and Physiology of the Petrels.* Academic Press, London & San Diego. Pp.613, ISBN 0-12-735-4158, £60.

This is the second volume of John Warham's great work, and the things said about the first in *Sea Swallow* 41: 69 still apply. It incorporates much additional information, and expands on such interesting subjects as flight and the ornithological oil industry; I wish I could also be equally polite about smell, which involves accounts of some nasty experiments by other people, or the casual treatment on p.38 of the disastrous damage done to petrels by rats; John Warham should know better. In general, the two volumes may now be regarded as a complete and up-to-date summary of a vast amount of otherwise often inaccessible work, extending far beyond the petrels, to cover most aspects of seabird biology. The author, who started out late in life as a good bird photographer, and then became a great observer, is now to be congratulated on a magnificent academic achievement.

W.R.P.B.

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Woods, Robin W. and Anne. 1997. *Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Falkland Islands.*
Pp. 190, 73 maps, 25 x 17 cm. Anthony Nelson Publishers, in association with Falklands Conservation, with support from WWF-UK. ISBN 0 904614 60 3. £25.00.

This is the first breeding bird atlas published for a South American country, and shows the importance of the Falkland archipelago for thriving populations of species that have declined dramatically in southern South America. The authors have 40 years personal knowledge of these islands, and this book is the outcome of contributions from about 160 observers, who sent in survey forms, over a period of ten breeding seasons, between 1983/84 and 1992/93. The delightful line drawings for each species are by Staff Sergeant Geoffrey McMullan. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded on these islands, of which over 60 breed there, but these are now under threat. This book provides, for the future, an important statement of the present situation.

This work is a classic example of how the observations of a wide range of birdwatchers, both professional and amateur, can be combined to produce a reference of real value. About 80 (51%) of these were Falkland Islanders or contract workers; 29 (19%) were visiting tourists to the Falklands; 47 (30%) were military personnel, temporarily stationed on the islands, or visiting in RN ships and RFAs. RNBWS members will be pleased to note the names of many past contributors to *Sea Swallow* prominent among the list of credits: Chris Bailey, Brian Bewsher, Bill Bourne, Bill Curtis, Paul Fitzpatrick, Colin MacGregor, and Michael Winter; also the mention of personnel from a number of named RN ships.

'This is an important book and, with the continuing exploitation of fishery resources, and the threatened development of offshore oil now imminent, its publication is very timely. The excellent maps provide unique distributional data of all established breeding species and, more importantly, show where current knowledge is incomplete, and where further surveys are necessary. The Atlas will be of interest to Falkland Islanders and will be a key reference for future visitors and tourists, because there is much work still to be done. It will also be of interest to ornithologists worldwide, to anyone studying island faunas, and to people who are concerned about the environment. Maps included show the distribution of introduced mammals, including domestic/feral Cat, Common and Black Rat and European Rabbit.

The result is handsomely produced, and compares very favourably with the previous work from the same stable - Robin Woods' *Guide to Birds of the Falkland Islands* (1988). Keen RNBWS members, especially those with past experience of these islands, will want to own a copy, as should all librarians of ships deploying to the South Atlantic. Ship's companies visiting for the first time, and hoping to be useful helping the local conservation efforts when they get there, should at least make sure that their Ship's Library Officer obtains a copy before sailing south.

M.B.C.

ALL THE WORLD'S SEABIRDS

Jim Enticott and David Tipling, Septempter 1997. *Photographic Handbook the Seabirds of the World*. Pp.234, including over 700 full colour photographs. 28 x 21cm.
New Holland (Publishers) Ltd., 24 Nutford Place, London W1H 6DQ. ISBN 1 85368 945 9. £29.99.

This is yet another monumental book, which must find a place on every seabird enthusiast's bookshelf. It is designed to complement and enhance existing artwork guides, such as *Seabirds: An Identification Guide* by Peter Harrison (Helm, 1985), and contains over 700 full-colour photographs, showing a wide variety of plumages, including many invaluable flight shots, of over 300 seabird species.

Jim Enticott is well-known as one of the world's leading experts on seabird distribution and biology, at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute for African Ornithology. He is a founder member of the British Birds Rarities Committee's Seabird Advisory Panel. David Tipling, the Photographic Editor, is one of Britain's best-known photographers, and runs his own photographic agency. Together they have combined to produce this invaluable reference book .

I am greatly impressed by the simple layout: species are listed, and described on the left-hand side of the page, with a wide range of photographs opposite, and a simple identification key to identify each with the appropriate caption. There are several obvious caption errors, for which an *errata* slip has already been produced. It is good to see that, with very few exceptions, the colloquial names used accord with those in the RNBWS *Checklist of Seabirds*, published last year, with *Sea Swallow* 45.

Photographic acknowledgements are given to the long list of contributors, on pages 230-231. Sadly, though RNBWS was invited, at a late stage, to offer photographs for this book, we were not able to provide examples of suitable quality, for the list of species which then remained outstanding, from our own "library". But it is good to see the names of two successful members: Chris Patrick (7) and Beau Rowlands (1).

This book does not set out to be the definitive identification guide, but aims rather to define the current distribution and status of each species, its various races, and taxonomic near-relatives. The authors have done their best to keep abreast of the continuing taxonomic debate, and give credit (p9) to "Dr Bill Bourne for last-minute important comment and advice on the outstanding taxonomic conundrums". The emphasis of this book is to identify which species are under threat, and where, so that appropriate conservation measures may be taken. It is alarming to realise that BirdLife International, in *Birds to Watch 2* (Collar *et al* 1994) assesses 20% of seabirds as globally threatened, and each such species in this book is accorded an IUCN classification of "Critical", "Endangered", "Vulnerable" or "Near Threatened". It is good to see credit given, in the Introduction, to conservation success stories - to Alec and Frank Zino from Madeira for "bringing a halt to seabird slaughter on the Salvages", and to David Wingate who has "almost single-handedly ensured the continued survival of the Bermuda Petrel" (see pp71-75 this issue).

One minor criticism: the distribution and status section for each species, and especially for the more elusive ones, list a spate of island names,

unfamiliar to many. Most readers will need to rush to an atlas to remind themselves precisely where these are, and a detailed map, or a series of simple distribution maps, would have been helpful.

This book is probably too large to take on seabirding trips in remote oceans, but should be a vital source of reference, for all concerned with seabird conservation, when planning trips, and on return home. I have already found it very useful for clarifying my thoughts, in the editing process for this *Sea Swallow*. And libraries of ships deploying to the South Atlantic, and other distant sea areas, should have a copy.

M.B.C.

Black Guillemots *Uria aalge*, Sanda, June 1996 (see pp 40-46)
Photo: Captain Chris Peach RN

Imperial Shag *P.a. georgianus*, South Georgia, February 1995
Photo: Chris Patrick

OBITUARY
Vero Wynne-Edwards and Seabirds

It is curious that while the many obituaries of Professor V.C.Wynne-Edwards, FRS, DSc, CBE, who died on 5 January at the age of 90, all comment on his debatable status as an exponent of the social regulation of animal numbers and Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council, few give much space to his indisputable standing as a pioneer marine ornithologist. Wynne did not actually invent seabirds, but at several critical points he played a key part in the emergence of modern marine ornithology.

There is little evidence that he noticed seabirds during his youth in the Yorkshire Dales, education at Rugby School and New College, Oxford, or first employment as a marine biologist at the Plymouth Marine Laboratory. Although he must have heard some talk about seabirds by W.B.Alexander and Max Nicholson while at Oxford, he apparently first became interested in them when appointment as an assistant professor at McGill University, Montreal, in 1930, led to regular Atlantic crossings, culminating in eight specially devoted to the study of seabirds in the summer of 1933, leading to an exceptionally thorough report in the *Proceedings* of the Boston Natural History Society (40(4): 233-346) which earned him its Walker Prize. In it he developed an insufficiently appreciated pioneer study by Poul Jesperson in the *Oceanographic Reports of the Danish Dana Expedition 1920-22* (7: 1-36) into a coherent description of seabird biology, recognising inshore, offshore and pelagic types of distribution, which has formed the basis of subsequent work, with the result that he was later elected first Chairman of the Seabird Committee of the International Ornithological Congress in 1966.

He also organised a pioneer cooperative census of the world population of the Northern Gannet with H. Morrey Salmon in 1936 (*British Birds* 29: 262-276), and discussed "Intermittent breeding of the Fulmar with some general observations on non-breeding in sea-birds" in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* (1939: 127-132) which, while also by no means the first of their kind, appeared at a critical time and set the pattern for the development of work after World War II. He then became one of the initial advisers to the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society in 1946, and the first speaker at the conference held with the British Trust for Ornithology to introduce the new science of marine ornithology in London on 5 November 1949 (*Sea Swallow* 3: 5-10). Although later immersed in administrative chores, he continued to use seabirds as one of the main bases for developing ideas about social population regulation formulated at the 11th International Ornithological Congress in Basel in 1954, and then in his massive book *Animal Dispersion in relation to social behaviour* (London and Edinburgh) in 1962.

Wynne was a pleasant, slight, amiable and inoffensive, but inflexibly tough, stoic whose favorite recreations were hill-walking and skiing, and he expected the same standards of other people. He always remained prepared to help others without trying to impose his views on them. While his book provoked an astonishingly violent reaction among his contemporaries, who had been brought up to believe that Nature is red in tooth and claw, and objected to the heretical suggestion that most other organisms seem to get along better together than men, it was interesting to observe how during their most violent attacks his severest critics would often pause in full cry to remark what a nice person he was.

W.R.P.B.

EXERCISE DIEGO GARCIA SURVEY

Latest update - Note by Editor

Planning has been taking place throughout the past year to mount the RNBWS expedition to carry out a detailed survey of Diego Garcia and the outlying islands of the Chagos Archipelago. This is the outcome of Colour Sergeant Peter Carr's initial reconnaissance visit last year, and the recommendations he made in his article in *Sea Swallow* 45: 95-99,

Addendum. Referring to this article, there is an important omission in the species list, which should now be added, for completeness:

"**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* sp.** A total of up to six, in non-breeding plumage, were seen daily feeding at Point Marianne. They were located on the mud-flats at low tide, or along the shoreline, in the company of Cattle Egrets and the Great White Egret, at high tide. Identification of small white egret species is problematical in non-breeding plumage, particularly when complicated by birds feeding out of their normal habitat and range. Swinhoe's Egret *Egretta eolophytes* and the Western Heron *Egretta garzetta gularis/schistacea* are possibilities, though all characteristics observed indicated that these birds were of the nominate subspecies. This is the first record of this species from the Chagos Archipelago."

The Diego Garcia Survey team of six comprises: Colour Sergeant Peter Carr RM (Expedition Leader), Captain Chris Peach RN (Deputy Leader), Lieutenant Christine Mayoh RN, (Supply Officer), LA Metoc Chris Patrick RN (Recorder), Ldg. Wtr. Marie Bennett RN (Recorder) and Corporal Colin Shand RM (Medical/stores). At the time of going to press, the party has just left, on 3 August, (though Chris Peach's departure was delayed, for operational reasons), and are due to return on 20th.

The expedition aims are to conduct a full census of the breeding seabirds on East, Middle and West Islands, a full breeding seabird survey of the designated reserve area north of Minni Minni to assess the impact of predation by rats and cats, and a full census of the birds of Diego Garcia; to determine the subspecies of White-breasted Waterhen *Amourornis phoenicurus* which is breeding on the airfield lagoons; and to undertake ringing studies on migrant waders.

It is hoped to receive an "initial report", in time to include in this issue, but the detailed write-up of this ambitious project must await next year's *Sea Swallow* 47.

M.B.C.

STOP PRESS!!

The following was received (by FAX) 15 August, from Expedition Leader, Peter Carr:

Flight out was uneventful, Captain Chris Peach joined us on Saturday 9th, and is leaving tonight (15th).

The team has conducted thorough survey of the outlying islands, and we have a complete picture with accurate counts of the breeding seabirds using them. Species breeding on the islands in August are Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* (1,000s), Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (100s), and White Tern *Gygis alba* (10s). There is strong evidence that Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* breeds on the

islands, and the possibility that at some time in the year Black-naped Tern *S. sumateria* and Greater and Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata minor* and *F. ariel.*

Other records of note include a first for the Chagos: Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus*, and some second records for the area, including Common and Arctic Tern *S. hirundo* and *S. paradisaea*, and Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes.*

A full census has been conducted of the mainland, and estimations of all resident populations have been calculated. We continue to monitor the daily arrival of migrant waders. Data has been collected on the breeding biology and moult of Red-footed Booby, and moult in Brown Noddy, which we hope to publish, if there is not already published literature on these topics.

In summary, the expedition has gone extremely well. This is due to the valued assistance from the Naval Party on Diego Garcia (NP 1002), without which the surveys would have been grossly incomplete, and much hard, hot and long wet hours in the field, by the team.

We look forward to returning to the UK, and presenting our expedition report, at the AGM on 5 December.

MBC

TAILPIECE

INTOXICATED PALLID BONXIE

Andy Paterson (1996, 1997) has now reported yet another pale large skua, in very poor plumage, from a beach between Malaga and Torremolinos, south-east Spain, in May 1997. He wondered if this also might be a McCormick's Skua, but on closer inspection it proved to have been ringed as a chick in Shetland, in 1983. This raises the question how a mature bird could have been there at that season, in such a state?

One possible answer is that these are top predators, which accumulate toxic chemicals, and currently appear to hold the British all-comer's record of 1,079 parts per million (0.1%!) of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), found in a bird found dying in west Wales (N.E.R.C. 1983).

Is this yet more evidence that the Mediterranean is in a mess?

N.E.R.C. 1983. Contaminants in marine top predators *Natural Environment Research Council Publ. Ser. C 23.*

Paterson, A. 1996. STOP PRESS - and yet further reports from Malaga, southern Spain *Sea Swallow* 43: 77-78.

Paterson, A. 1997. Great Expectations. *Birdwatch* 62: 39-42

WRPB

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*, authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material rnay take the form of papers, notes progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing, together with figures and diagrams Those with facilities to do so are encouraged to send on 3.5"diskette, (specifying the word processing software used). ASCII back-up text is also desirable, together with a print-out.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition must reach the Editor by **31st May.**

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